DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 422 528 CE 077 101

AUTHOR	Belfiore, Mary Ellen, Ed.
TITLE	Chronicling the Learning Curve: Workplace Education Instructors Share Their Stories.
INSTITUTION	ABC Canada, Toronto (Ontario).
SPONS AGENCY	Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, Toronto.
ISBN	ISBN-0-9683663-1-7
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	69p.
AVAILABLE FROM	ABC Canada, 1450 Don Mills Road, Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2X7, Canada; 416-442-2292; fax: 416-442-2293; e-mail: abccanada@southam.ca; World Wide Web: http://www.abc.canada.org
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - General (020) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; *Adult Educators; Adult Literacy; American Indians; *Basic Skills; Communication Skills; Cultural Differences; *Education Work Relationship; Educational Needs; Educational Practices; Foreign Countries; *Literacy Education; Numeracy; On the Job Training; Personal Narratives; Rural Areas; Rural Education; *Teacher Attitudes; *Workplace Literacy
IDENTIFIERS	*Canada

ABSTRACT

This book contains the personal narratives of six Canadian workplace education instructors. The opening article (Mary Ellen Belfiore) discusses the remaining narratives within the context of the theme that the essence of workplace education is teaching and learning in distinct cultures. "Math Works!" (Brian Nicholson) relates how teaching a highly successful math course is positioned within a company's move toward high performance. "Tending to Literacy in Rural Ontario" (Lee O'Rourke) chronicles the lives and learning of experienced farmers as they overcome hesitation and fear to pass agricultural certification exams. In "More than Job Preparation: Turning Literacy into Gold" (Rebekah Courtney, Don Matthews), the experience of teaching basic skills and job readiness for remote mining jobs to a First Nations band is presented with special emphasis on issues in teaching members of another culture. "Clearly the Way To Go...in the Workplace" (Leah Morris) explains how one instructor managed to deliver customized services to two companies with very different orientations, commitments, and employee populations. The final narrative, "Communicating in a Diverse Workplace" (Judith Bond), addresses differences head on in sessions offered to all employees in a team-based manufacturing company. Concluding the book are author and editor biographies. (MN)

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Chronicling the Learning Curve:

Workplace Education Instructors Share their Stories

Edited by Mary Ellen Belfiore

CE 077101

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Published in Canada by:

ABC CANADA
1450 Don Mills Road
Don Mills, Ontario
M3B 2X7
Email: abccanada@southam.ca
Internet: http://www.abc-canada.org

ISBN 0-9683663-1-7

Design: Ellie Robinson

Printing: Maud Street Printing Services

ABC CANADA

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Acknowledgements

We gratefully acknowledge the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training for funding this project and the Haldimand-Norfolk Literacy Council for additional financial assistance.

Thanks to Sande Minke for inspiring this project and for knowing what workplace educators need and want.

Thanks to our writers for taking up the storyline, putting their hearts into it and revising with patience and good cheer.

Thanks to Susan Brekelmans, our copy editor, for her enthusiasm, empathy for the writers and love of words.

Thanks to Sue Folinsbee and Hilke Grunys for reviewing drafts of the narratives.

Thanks to Ana Oliveira for the many ways she assisted us in preparing this collection.

Introduction

This collection of narratives written by your colleagues is an intimate look at teaching basic skills in different cultures. We don't mean capital "C" culture, but rather the culture of organizations, professions and communities with all the diversity of the people who work in them. We asked instructors to tell you their best stories of how they taught, how people learned, and most importantly, how everyone changed — including the organizations. We hope that through these narratives you will experience the authors' learning processes, feel their anxieties, share in their revelations, and come away with a productive curiosity and new paths to explore in workplace education.

We also hope these narratives offer you useful examples of how instructors incorporate the workplace setting, its routines, and its materials into their basic skills courses. While each of us has preferred methods and models for program development and instruction, each workplace forces us to shape delivery to the context of the participants and the organization. For example, you will see how workplace and individual needs assessments, curriculum development and evaluation differ in each setting and how well they succeed. Instructors are called upon to marry the needs, interests and goals of the participants with those of the organiza-

tion. Whether these overlap, complement each other or diverge, our curriculum design and learning activities have to satisfy both the individuals and their organizations in order for workplace education to succeed.

The essence of workplace education is teaching and learning in distinct cultures. Even when we are part of an organization or profession, as is the instructor/farmer in this collection, as instructors we have the opportunity to position ourselves differently and understand new perspectives. Most frequently though, we walk into the unknown: organizational cultures in full swing with their own complex patterns of communication and work routines built on what we presume are shared assumptions, values and attitudes. We often find that, in fact, these assumptions are not shared but are understood differently across diverse populations within organizations, communities and professions. There, in that misty territory of unspoken or unacknowledged differences, workplace educators dare to venture with their own set of assumptions and interpretations.

Sound too far-fetched or exotic for a manufacturing site? When you read Brian Nicholson's narrative, you will see how teaching a highly successful math course is positioned within a company's move toward high performance. Brian's detailed, inventive and engaging math lessons capture the imagination of all the participants. They are well-prepared for the next steps the company wants to take, perhaps even ahead of them in wished-for opportunities.

In a rural setting, Leo O'Rourke takes us into the lives and learning of experienced farmers as they overcome hesitation and fear to successfully pass agricultural certification exams. We sit stunned with these farmers as they first encounter the bureaucracy's ideas of how they should work and learn. Leo not only takes us through their journey of rediscovering reading and learning, but also invites us to be part of his own journey towards professional and personal development.

Taking our workplace skills to the community we step into an extremely demanding cultural mix: teaching basic skills and job

readiness for remote mining jobs to members of a First Nations band. Rebekah Courtney, the coordinator, sets the stage by introducing the partners, the expectations, the problems, and the first results. Don Matthews, the instructor, plunges us into a series of remarkable discoveries about learning and cultures for both the participants and for Don himself.

Leah Morris's approach to "getting her foot in the door" is to use clear language as a graphic demonstration of how companies obscure understanding of their messages rather than encourage full comprehension. Leah writes about her experiences with two companies and how she managed to deliver customized services to suit their different orientations, commitment and employee populations. While the culture of one organization limits her role, the other offers possibilities for wide-ranging change and policy-making to ensure clear communication for the benefit of all employees.

Finally, Judith Bond's "Communicating in Diverse Workplaces" addresses differences head-on in sessions offered to all employees in a team-based manufacturing company. Even after working with this company over several years on various basic skills projects, Judith found that these sessions on communications and diversity revealed the extent to which employees and management differed in their assumptions about, and understanding of, life on-the-job. Judith carefully leads the groups (mixed job levels as well as mixed language capabilities) through activities in which they examine their communication patterns, their misunderstandings and assumptions, and try out solutions.

We hope you can picture yourself in each storyline and find your place as a workplace educator in your own communities. Please write to us with your stories and let's keep the spiral of learning from each other moving upwards.

Mary Ellen Belfiore
June 1998

Math Works!

By Brian D. Nicholson

Over two months in late 1996 and early 1997, I conducted a two-hour, bi-weekly math refresher course. Twelve men and women from the staff of a small, unionized Toronto manufacturer of architectural products were involved in the training. The firm was full of good intentions and great ideas about how to respond to increased competitive pressure domestically and internationally. However, the organization was concerned about its ability to implement them effectively given its diverse, largely ESL workforce.

I assessed a group of approximately 35 production workers on an individual basis over the course of several days. Following a mini organizational needs assessment, these 35 people were "invited" to join the course, based on their volunteering or being suggested by supervisors. There was little resistance to the invitation, however, and the skill review assessment was a combination of having a friendly chat, giving reassurance, examining current English and math skills, and checking prior learning.

The results showed that there were several clearly defined areas of concern. Among the participants was a group of new Canadians whose prior learning was largely limited to basic education in their home countries. They expressed a great deal of worry regarding their current math and English skill levels for both personal and

work-related activities. Moreover, they seemed to exhibit little confidence regarding their future trainability, especially in terms of adapting to technological changes rumored to be coming in the near future. The people who would participate in the class wanted to brush up on long-forgotten skills and reassure themselves that they could upgrade their skills.

These concerns jibed nicely with those of the company. The organization was looking for training that would prepare employees for future training — something that would build their foundation skills and their confidence levels. In addition, the company was keen to address issues as diverse as teamwork, problem solving, and continuous improvement skills.

Curiously, all parties within the organization seemed to believe that limited language skills were the greatest impediment to changes in the organization. The results of the assessment indicated otherwise. Language skills, although not without room for improvement, were not an impediment to training or communication in most cases. Math skills, commonly used in this setting and a major cause of self-doubt among interviewees, seemed a better target for the training. I decided, therefore, to design a math program to address the needs of all the stakeholders.

With all of this in mind, I set off to design my program.

Since learning math skills is a cumulative process, and since it is important to have well-organized material available for review, I intended to have the course designed, printed, and proofread before the first class. I didn't quite make it. I began the design process by immersing myself in the results of my individual assessments, my discussions with the head supervisor, and my consultation with management. I had asked all of them some variation on the question, "What would you like (your employees) to be able to do?" The various answers provided me with a list from which I was able to draw all of the skills required. The skills were organized into categories (whole numbers, decimals, percentage, etc.) arranged chronologically, and edited to fit into a ten-week time frame.

At that point, with the most vague of outlines to use as a guide, it became apparent that the most important result of any math course would not, in fact, be any of the math skills themselves, but the skills to apply them. In order to ensure that the skills reviewed in the classroom were portable to the shop floor and beyond, and to more fully meet the company's expectations, I decided to structure the program around a simple seven-step problem solving system. I had half-borrowed, half-developed a system over years of teaching survival-type math in a United Way training centre.

Seven-Step Problem Solving System

1. Make sure you know what you want.
2. Write down all the things you know.
3. Find the operation using key words.
4. Guess (estimate).
5. Do the math.
6. Compare your answer to your guess.
7. Check your work

Reduced to its simplest terms, the system requires participants to practice organization of information, clarification, estimation, and confirmation. In other words, common sense applied to math. It sounds simple, but it is easier said than done. However, I felt that to present a "Problem Solving System" as the centrepiece of the program would not be wise. Even those aware of limitations in their arithmetic skills are unlikely to respond well to the suggestion that they fail to use common sense.

Instead, I introduced problem solving as a theme in the first class and reiterated it in each of the subsequent nineteen classes. I decided to have the course run the gamut from whole numbers to decimals, fractions, the metric system, percentages, ratios, and a little basic geometry. We applied math skills to problems ranging from

NEC

the four basic operations (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division) through simple word problems, to a grand finale mastery class. In the final sessions, the class would work as a group and undertake a project that would involve all of the skills in a multi-task, problem solving environment.

I submitted an outline of this fairly ambitious program to the company's vice-president and management. When it was approved, I used it as the starting point for the actual class materials.

In the end, each class had a certain amount of structure. The printed material became a unifying factor, and its structure did a lot to put people at ease in the class, especially at the beginning.

At the start of each class, we exchanged pleasantries and dealt with any outstanding homework. Following that, I presented the participants with that day's lesson — stapled, hole-punched, and not too overwhelming in volume. There was always an inspirational quotation on the cover page, always a brain teaser to get everyone up for the challenge, and always review exercises, primarily focused on the material covered in the previous class. People knew what was coming next and the sequential nature of the review provided some reassurance to the less confident members of the group.

Typical Warm-Up Exercise

If a person goes to a well with an 8 litre can and a 3 litre can, how can he or she come home with exactly 4 litres of water?

Beyond that, the class usually featured a short explanation of the topic of the day. People were encouraged to interrupt (which they did after a while). Interruptions were usually to get clarification or to find out if the real world example they had thought of fit. Examples done on the white board followed the explanation. Work

then moved to pairs, small groups or teams. Participants presented their results to the group using a variety of media: overheads, white boards, flip charts, graphs, diagrams, and so on. I wanted to enhance the "continuous improvement skills" of the group, to make them more comfortable using the tools of business and to ensure that they could contribute in similar settings. At this point, the class would be a little more than half-way through. The remaining time was usually devoted to some sort of prepared project that portrayed a real world application of skills. They had to use their problem solving system in a context that was not classroom oriented.

During a segment on decimals, for example, my class was transformed into tables of diners (four to a table) listening to a tape-recorded conversation between a waitress and four customers. The participants had to total the bill using their listening skills, their math skills, the problem solving system, the menus, and their ability to work together. Since these activities tended to be fairly lighthearted, I never gave a break in my class, and no one complained! I suspect, although they sometimes protested to the contrary, that they were having too much fun.

In another assignment, participants role-played members of the payroll department, calculated (and wrote) phony pay cheques based on time cards that I supplied as well as tax rates and other deductions that I imposed. Not only was this assignment a great opportunity to review skills, but it gave them some insight into the job of a co-worker, especially when I announced that we were working against a deadline and that no one could leave until the job was done. It was a threat that I was not forced to carry out.

On another occasion, more directly of interest to management, I gave class members a stack of invoices with all of the numbers, but none of the calculations. I asked them to complete the invoices accurately and quickly — a task that convinced them that they didn't want to work in the office. It was a good example of a task that they might be asked to complete in a more "team oriented" activity in their workplace.

Some alterations in, and variations of, this class routine inevitably occurred as difficulties arose. I extended the amount of class time dedicated to the metric system and the amount of time spent on fractions due to difficulties in comprehension. The company's products are often built to U.S. specifications, so we were stuck with dealing with fractions. They had to be faced.

The previously mentioned doubt about personal English skills reared its head more than a few times during the course. I addressed the concerns as they came up, in short tutorials. The class had a very supportive atmosphere. People would offer assistance with pronouncing unfamiliar math vocabulary or explanations of new words. When participants with weaker English skills stood at the front and presented for their groups, they always received an extra long round of applause. No one seemed to mind three or four minutes of English instruction during the class. I'm not sure how to explain the easy camaraderie among participants; perhaps it was due to the fact that they had all been with the company for many years. In addition to this spontaneous help, I also asked class members with higher math and English skills to act as coaches. I organized groups and teams to address not only reading comprehension doubts, but limitations in math and problem solving skills as well.

Perhaps the greatest challenge that arose was the company's decision to suspend the class for a period of time to clear a production backlog. Two months later, the class resumed on a reduced schedule, meeting only once a week, instead of the usual twice a week. Carrying confidence forward from one session to the next proved challenging: "I forgot everything" became the common refrain. Abandoning my 200 pages of prepared text, we held several review classes, with real world projects that used as many of the already-learned skills as possible. Gradually, the participants realized that they had (with a little bit of coaching) retained most of the material covered. In the end, I put a positive spin on the situation and convinced my class that their ability to learn, remember, and overcome the unscheduled break was all the more reason for confi-

dence in themselves. Moreover, it gave me some reassurance that this sort of interruption need not necessarily ruin a good class.

Shortly after these "review" classes, the end of my 40-hour allotment was in sight. It was time for the mastery classes. The class organized itself into two groups. Each group completed a mock costing of a job carried out at a fictitious site (we used the company's lunchroom as a model). To cost the job, participants had to complete all measurements (imperial or metric); calculate costs based on the number of pieces required and the amount of material consumed; include percentage based on scrap factors; formulate costs (based on rates, times, and tax rates supplied by me); add on a profit margin; calculate the costs required for shipping; and find GST and PST. Finally, they presented their results verbally and visually in a meeting of the two groups, where their results had to be the same except for minor differences due to rounding. It worked!

Although the course included short quizzes for evaluative purposes at the beginning and end of the program, as well as homework each class, it was the successful completion of these mastery classes that fully communicated to the participants their level of achievement. They found themselves able to perform not only the math skills, but also the new requirements of conducting a meeting, making a presentation, and public speaking.

The class concluded on a high note. Final reports were written, certificates were distributed, and pizza and pop made their inevitable appearance. Unfortunately, that is where progress seems to have stopped.

Without diminishing the accomplishment, the course seemed to have taken place in a vacuum. Management made no swift follow-up with subsequent training and no attempt at cross-training, so life continued pretty much as usual at the plant. It is a source of some frustration that my recently energized "continuous improvement ready" participants returned to jobs where they had no opportunity to use their improved problem solving and teamwork skills. People who were thoroughly ready to participate in Quality Control (QC)

circles found that there were no QC circles to attend. Ultimately, the responsibility for acting upon, and using the progress made inside the classroom, rests with the company.

Given another opportunity to conduct this same class, I would double my efforts to ensure that there was adequate recognition and use of accomplishments outside the classroom. Perhaps I failed to make clear to the company how much more the participants would now be comfortable doing. I did produce monthly and final reports with all the details about what we had reviewed, giving high praise for the participants. I placed an emphasis on the significant improvements between initial and final grades. The company did not, however, have a "next step" in place. Perhaps owing to the fact that no full scale organizational needs assessment was done, the company failed to capitalize fully on the changes. The end result of heightened math, problem solving, and English skills as well as increased confidence at home and in training situations is not an entirely disappointing one. I had, perhaps naively, hoped for more.

2

Tending to Literacy in Rural Ontario

By Leo O'Rourke

8:30 a.m. The farmers and vegetable growers drift slowly into a makeshift classroom set up at a local Ontario Ministry of Agriculture and Food (OMAF)[1] regional office. I feel the apprehension in the room as people mumble to each other and wander around with coffee and donuts supplied by the coordinator. We pay our $50 registration fee and take our seats at tables with books neatly laid out at each place. The OMAF manager calls for quiet and then explains why this training session is obligatory. He outlines the new Ontario laws and regulations for pesticides and how they now affect the farmers in the province. He then proudly introduces the instructor, a university graduate and part-time farmer, for our one-day Pesticide Safety Course.

The instructor holds up the Pesticide Safety Manual which is one inch thick with 24 chapters and 250 pages. As he asks us to turn to the index, participants look at the list of 24 chapters. "We have to cover twelve chapters by 11:30 a.m. for an exam before lunch," he says. "In the afternoon, we'll complete the final twelve chapters so we can finish the second exam by 4:30 p.m. You have to score over 70 per cent to pass the course and receive a Pesticide Certificate."

[1] *Now the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.*

The room is silent. As he turns on the overhead projector to explain the agenda, people begin to whisper, loud enough to be overheard by the instructor: "How can we understand this book in one day?"

"It would take a week to read this book. I can't even pronounce most of the words, let alone understand all this information."

Grumbling. The nervous instructor tries to get quiet in the room. An elderly farmer wants to ask a question: "Why do I need a pesticide certificate now to work on my own farm? I haven't needed one in the past!" The instructor takes a quick sip of coffee to clear his throat.

"The new Ontario law states that you can't purchase pesticides in Ontario without a valid Pesticide Certificate. It'll be like a driver's license. You'll be issued a number and a certificate. You'll have to renew it every five years by taking a new pesticide course."

Now the room gets loud again as thirty people talk at once. The instructor calls for order but another farmer shouts out, "I'll get my neighbour to buy the chemicals for me with his certificate."

"That's not recommended. Under the new law, the person who purchases the pesticide is responsible for where it is used." The instructor looks at his watch, nervously puts up the first overhead and calls for our attention. The course is already behind schedule. "This course is being offered to farmers throughout Ontario over the next few months. The goal of the course is to train the agricultural community in handling and using pesticides. The government wants to ensure that people are properly trained to use the products safely and correctly. With proper usage, you can protect the food supply and the environment which is precisely why the new law is in place."

Regaining his composure, the instructor asks us to introduce ourselves and give our occupations. We reluctantly do so. Ninety per cent are self-employed, a few have hobby farms, the rest are employed by large cash crop farmers. Most of us are more than fifty years old and have been out of school for more than thirty years.

The fear and tension in the farmers' voices strikes a chord with me.

I listen attentively as the course continues at a rapid pace, outlining how pesticides are regulated, and explaining the new laws that now apply to farmers who work their own land. The farmers are fearful of change and see the "Spills Bill", as the law is called, infringing on their rights as self-employed people. The instructor explains the risks of using pesticides and the new safety clothing and masks that we should wear to protect ourselves against exposure to the chemicals.

11:30 a.m. Time for the first exam. More than six people get up and leave, knowing they don't have the reading comprehension skills to absorb all this information in one day.

In the afternoon we cover storage, transportation and spills, including reporting and clean-up procedures. We spend only one hour on calibration of the pesticide sprayer. Since all pesticides sold in Ontario are now in metric amounts, the calibration has to be in metric. "I've always used imperial measures — acres and gallons. I don't understand metric," says one farmer with great frustration.

"You'll have to learn to convert from imperial to metric."

The room is dead silent. Most of the farmers are in shock. Having been out of school for only about twenty years, I'm one of the few with a knowledge of the metric system. "What portion of the exam is on the calibration of the sprayer?" I ask.

"Thirty percent. It's important to do the calibration properly."

After I finish the exam, I am exhausted from the overwhelming strain of trying to absorb 250 pages of information in one day. Many course participants ask for more time, struggling to understand the metric system and the calibration questions. I see tension and disgust on people's faces as they hand in their exams.

I decide right then to go to the regional OMAF rep to explain how I feel about the course and ask if he has had any other feedback on the intensity of the day. He explains, "All over Ontario the problems are the same, with more than 50 per cent failure, and farmers are refusing to attend the second course."

"Whoever set up the course didn't understand who would be

receiving the training. Didn't you do a pilot course to understand who the participants are?" I ask angrily.

"There was a rush to get the training completed this spring."

Still upset, I respond, "You take $50 from each participant and overwhelm them with a 250-page manual in one day. What do you expect? These are very proud, self-employed people. They will find a way of beating the system and will not be humiliated again in this kind of forum." The rep asks me to calm down.

"Do you have any suggestions to improve the course layout?"

"Either you run the course over two or three days or do some pre-course instruction in the evenings. I'm willing to help give pre-course information to farmers."

And that is how I got involved as an instructor. Two weeks later the OMAF rep called to say that pre-course instruction would be offered to all farmers who wished to attend. I volunteered to be an evening instructor in my area.

In preparation for instruction I was given materials and instructor training. The materials consisted of a video and a workbook put out by Centralia College of Agriculture Technology through a workplace literacy incentive grant from the Ministry of Education. In our instructor training we learned the principles of adult literacy, which emphasize building on what people already know, understanding their environment and working conditions, and using their strengths to promote a positive attitude toward learning. We left our training sessions motivated and committed to achieving our goal of helping fellow farmers understand the pesticide manual.

I still remember my first evening class and how scared I was that the participants would see me in the same way as the instructor who had given the previous pesticide course. I was expecting ten people but only six had the courage to attend. I wasn't surprised considering how upset they must have been after the one-day pesticide course. I had notes in front of me to keep myself on track and to overcome my nervousness. I began by telling them

how I felt after taking the course and that I could empathize with people who had no familiarity with the metric system. When I explained that this time they would work at their own pace with no set time for completion, I could see the relief on their faces.

Then I explained that I needed some background information from each person so I could prepare lessons with them in mind. Here's what I asked:

Background Information

Name:
Have you taken the pesticide course before?
If so, how did you feel about the course?
How familiar are you with the metric system?

Taking turns, they expressed how unprepared they were to understand the pesticide book in one day. Not one of the six participants had any knowledge of the metric system — it was like a foreign language to them. After an initial exercise I was confident that they had a good grasp of imperial measures. When I tried an exercise comparing imperial to metric, all I got were blank looks and I knew they were not understanding me.

I switched to the video which explained how the course was set up by the college and then I suggested some ground rules for the group to ensure respect and cooperation. When they all agreed that they felt comfortable with the course, promised to return and not give up, I felt a sense of accomplishment, that we were on the right track.

For the next session I decided to be creative and bring in some visual aids to help everyone understand the metric system and the difference between metric and imperial. I laid out the visual aids in front of me on the table: a glass quart, gallon bottle and litre bottle; a yardstick and a metre ruler; a pound of lard and a kilogram container. Afterwards, they said this visual representation was the turning point

they needed to understand metric. The video provided the visual assistance they needed to compare acres to hectares. As I played the video over and over, they drew diagrams to show that they understood the conversion from metric to imperial and back to metric. I had hoped the conversion would come quickly to them but it took ten sessions before they felt comfortable with their newly learned skills.

Two of the participants, who described themselves as having a mental block with math, were struggling to understand the conversion. I worked with them one-on-one, at their own pace, for an hour each session. I quickly understood that I had to have empathy and develop a personal trust with each participant or I would lose them. I tried to relate to the farmers, such proud and independent individuals, on their own terms, and learned as much from them as they did from me.

In each three-hour session, we spent one hour on conversion and the other two hours on the pesticide manual. Here are some examples from the manual:*

Applying the Right Amount of Pesticide

The next step is to calculate how much pesticide to use. You need to know how much pesticide and carrier to add to each tank or hopper, and the amount of pesticide you need for the whole area . .

You will learn to calculate the following information:

1. How large is the treatment area?
2. What is the application rate for this pesticide?
3. How much **pesticide** should you buy?
4. How much **pesticide** should you add to a **full** tank?
5. How much **pesticide** should you add to a **part** tank?
6. How much **pesticide** solution should you add to a **part** tank?
7. How much granular pesticide do you need for a certain area?

* *Sample sections from the Grower Pesticide Safety Course reproduced with permission from the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.*

How to Calculate the Amount of Pesticide You Need

- Multiply the length of the field times the width.
- If you are using metres, divide this number by 10,000 — the number of m^2 in a hectare. This gives you the number of hectares.

$$\text{Ha} = \frac{\text{length (m) x width (m)}}{10{,}000\ m^2/\text{ha}}$$

- If you are using feet, divide the number by 43,560 — the number of ft^2 in an acre. This gives you the number of acres.

$$\text{acres} = \frac{\text{length (ft) x width (ft)}}{43{,}560\ ft^2/\text{acre}}$$

Sample question

A farmer has 45 acres of potatoes. He needs to spray BRAVO to control disease at the recommended rate of 2 L/ha. His sprayer output is 50 gallons/acre, and it has a capacity of 500 gallons.

a) How many litres of BRAVO does he need to buy to cover the 45 acres?
b) How many acres can he spray with a full tank?
c) How many litres of BRAVO should be added to one full tank?

During the sessions, participants learned how to read for main ideas, using a yellow highlighter to bring attention to key sections in each chapter. For homework, I asked them to read the chapter we had covered and the chapter to be taken up in the following session. They found this amount of reading difficult at first because many of them were not used to reading on a regular basis. They

honestly admitted that they did not enjoy reading because their skills were weak from lack of use. They felt comfortable with farm magazines although some only looked at the pictures and the caption underneath. Now they were using the dictionary, their wives were helping them read, and their children were asking for bedtime stories. Working together as a group created trust, respect and confidence. When I heard their stories about being involved again with their children, it became clear to me that we were on a new path for lifelong learning.

The participants took twenty sessions before they felt confident enough to write the pesticide exam again. They decided to take the one-day course as a group and I agreed to accompany them. Although they felt unsure of their skills at the start of the day, I reminded them to stay calm and focused and follow along in their books as the instructor went through the chapters quickly. They were able to understand the course content this time and could calibrate the sprayers in metric.

At lunch time, one of the participants was ready to quit and leave because he didn't have enough time to finish the first part of the exam. His reading skills were weak and he couldn't understand all the information quickly enough. I asked the instructor if this participant could have an oral exam and he agreed on two conditions: he had to ask all the questions and the participant had to write down his answers after giving verbal answers. With this reassurance, the participant agreed to finish the afternoon portion of the course. In the end, everyone got more than 80 per cent on the exam and felt proud of their accomplishment.

Before the exam I spoke to the OMAF office and was given permission to videotape their pesticide course. I thought the video would be useful for future training, and to help review the course in five years, when the exams had to be taken again.

In the last few sessions we got to know each other on a personal level and decided to meet after writing the pesticide exam. When we got together again, we talked about what we wanted to do to

continue improving our literacy skills. One person suggested we get together at the Agricultural Museum located at the Central Experimental Farm (CEF) in Ottawa. The CEF is 110 years old with many of the original buildings still standing. It displays equipment from the early 1900s as well as old pictures of the farm on loan from the National Archives. Our trip was the beginning of a new understanding of our history, of learning from our own experiences on the farm, of looking at the improvements in equipment through engineering, and of seeing how research improves the animals and crops we work with every day.

As we walked through the museum we were back in our childhood and could remember the long hours we spent with horse-drawn equipment and the first tractors used in the fifties and sixties. As we all reminisced over each piece of equipment, we were excited about our history. It is part of who we all are: self-employed farmers. Many of us were second- and third-generation farmers, still working the same land as our families with our wives and children. I bought a copy of *100 Harvests*, a book celebrating the 100th anniversary of the farm.

After this trip we decided to meet at our local community centre each week and read part of *100 Harvests*. As the weeks passed and we read several chapters, we wondered why there were no pictures in the book. We decided to visit the archives and were amazed at all the beautiful pictures taken at the CEF over the century. When we met the following week, the idea came up to put together a photo history book and share it with our families and friends. Learning became fun for all of us as we read about the history of Carleton County and the Ottawa Valley and stories of life on the CEF in the early 1900s. We used a computer to write our own text. Our group meeting started to get larger as families got involved in our photo history project. Family members pasted in pictures from the archives and captions we chose from *100 Harvests*. We met the author and got permission to use the captions in our book. We were very proud of our book, complete with sixty pictures and cap-

tions, and gave copies to family members to share our learning experience together.

We have gone our separate ways since our photo history project but still keep in touch. Several participants went back to school to complete their Grade 12 diploma. One took his Class D driver's license and now enjoys a new job as a truck driver. Another participant took part in a promotional video for the Ottawa-Carleton Coalition for Literacy where he explained how he overcame his fears and was able to learn new skills in a positive environment with fellow participants. We were all proud to hear that he felt comfortable enough to be part of the video and pass on to others his new appreciation for learning as an adult.

I feel comfortable as an instructor now that I have had this experience and I want to break the cycle of apathy with regard to learning new skills. In my community I give St. John Ambulance First Aid and CPR courses and understand the need for a refresher and re-certification every three years — a procedure the farmers were not prepared for with pesticide use. I also give training courses for junior and senior umpires to improve their skills and enhance their confidence in their own abilities. Instructors need on-going training and practice to reinforce our learning and understanding, letting us (like the farmers) use our skills with insight and knowledge.

I am a firm believer in lifelong learning and continue to grow as a person each day. I feel everyone must understand their own positive abilities and by sharing them we can all learn from each other. Through trust and friendship we are better individuals, parents and community leaders.

3

More Than Job Preparation: Turning Literacy into Gold

By Rebekah Courtney and Don Matthews

Rebekah and Don worked on a basic skills program intended to prepare residents of a remote northern community for work in a mine. First, Rebekah sets the stage, describing the work that went into preparing the curriculum, then Don writes about his experience of bringing the curriculum to the community.

For over a decade a mining company and people from several remote northern communities discussed the use of native land for mining. They finally reached an agreement allowing development to proceed, with a commitment from the company to train and employ a set percentage of the local aboriginal people. Community band members, tribal council representatives and mine personnel agreed that some candidates for the jobs needed basic skills upgrading and employment preparation in order to participate in training and apprenticeship programs at the mine. A partnership was formed, including: provincial and federal governments, two tribal councils, four bands, the gold mine, and a community college, to offer a basic skills workplace preparation program to the four communities in the area surrounding the mine site.

I was immediately interested when this history was described to me; and became the curriculum coordinator for the project.

Although I was based in an urban centre, my job was to work first with the partners, and later with the teachers.

My first task was to better understand the communities' needs and program goals, but we only had one month to prepare for the September start date. There was not enough time to visit each community, so all the partners met together half-way. Each partner had a different sense of what was essential in the program, but common goals included direct employment, further post-secondary training or skills-based training, and the development of skills to deal with personal, social and cultural issues. These goals would be achieved through three phases of the nine-month program: life skills, job readiness training and academic upgrading. Participation was limited to fifteen adults who had at least grade seven level literacy and numeracy skills. I left the bands and tribal councils with the tasks of recruiting participants and conducting individual needs assessments, while I returned to the city to begin work on the curriculum.

The partners had identified key elements that defined the program for them: familiarity with the mine operation and working environment, cultural awareness, community-based activities, and materials consistent with those offered in other college upgrading programs. In addition, the curriculum had to meet the ministry's quality standards. Given these factors and the teacher/student ratio of 1:15, the learner-centred model seemed the most appropriate choice for the project. The learner-centred model involves an individualized approach to curriculum materials, teaching methods, and assessment. The teachers had not been hired at this point, so I struggled with several questions: Which resources would be helpful at the outset and which should be developed or purchased with teacher input later? What manuals would instructors need as guides? Which materials would appeal to the adults participating in the program? Clearly no off-the-shelf package would meet the needs of all the participants in all the communities.

For phase one of the program I compiled five life skills manuals

with lessons and materials. The materials had to be flexible enough for the instructors to select the resources relevant to each group. As it turned out, these materials were not enough. Instructors created activities and materials which added more meaning to the life skills topics.

Although we had anticipated that participants would be young men seeking work, in fact, each community had very different groups. One consisted entirely of women, men were in the majority in two others, and the fourth was more gender-balanced. The ages varied, as did attitudes toward religion and spirituality, traditional ways of life versus modern technology and lifestyle, and personal and social issues. We had expected more consistency among the communities since, by northern standards, they were relatively close together, but a unique life skills course was needed for each site.

Job readiness was the second phase, including a more structured series of employment preparation modules, with activities and written assignments as well as materials from the mine. These materials included mining journals, pamphlets, videos, job descriptions and prerequisites, and safety manuals. The instructors could adapt them to each community and select other materials to meet individual needs. Each instructor tried different approaches and materials to link the program with the community during this phase: employer visits, job shadowing, employment research in the community, guest speakers, and mine tours.

Phase three of the program was devoted to upgrading in mathematics and communications. The ministry direction was to use the newly drafted outcomes. An outcome-based curriculum and the learner-centred model require a variety of resource materials to meet individual goals and enable participants to progress in their preferred learning styles. In theory, instructors would begin with an assortment of texts, booklets and software, purchased in small numbers with a plan to add to this menu after they had a chance to better assess their learners and receive feedback from them. Eventually we hoped to establish a small resource centre in each

community where materials could be selected, adapted and shared.

The councils supplied computers to each site, but these were not available in all the communities in time for classes, so software purchases and implementation were delayed. When computers and software arrived, instructors said the participants enjoyed learning in the new medium. However, the instructors all agreed that the overall resources for this wide-ranging program were inadequate and they wanted materials with more native content at a basic level. With the demands of teaching in a new context with new methods, they didn't have sufficient time to create or adapt materials that would be most appropriate.

Since we had adopted a learner-centred model, I encouraged the instructors to use a variety of teaching methods such as one-on-one tutoring, small and large group instruction, computer-assisted learning and peer tutoring. Although instructors experimented with different methods, most continued with familiar methods. Participants' reactions to different teaching methods also played a role in deciding how to teach and learn. For instance, some instructors felt that the group process may not have been culturally appropriate since so many participants had difficulty learning and speaking in groups. In contrast, another instructor found that the participants, all at a similar academic level, preferred learning as a group and helped design curriculum materials and activities.

Our initial assessments also had to be more individualized to work within a learner-centered model. We used a three-part process beginning with the assessment tool, "Getting Started," developed specifically for this project. This tool guided an interview with the participants to gather information about education, previous work, interests, learning styles and goals. The second part was a basic communications and mathematics assessment to determine where to begin with each person. The information from both "Getting Started" and the academic assessments was condensed into a Learning Plan Summary. This process provided a starting point for curriculum planning, on-going assessment and

learner evaluation. Participants and teachers worked cooperatively at each step of the process, including the development of personal portfolios to evaluate progress and achievement of goals.

The instructors found that because they had not done the initial interview, they had to complete learning plans and give academic assessments after the fact. They also found that the participants' numeracy and literacy skills were not at a grade seven level but somewhere between grade two and grade five. Thus, participants needed to develop their skills more before they could achieve the required levels in their academic upgrading and job readiness for mining. This meant that some mining-related reading materials (e.g. health and safety, mining projects across Canada) were too demanding for the participants.

Interestingly, the focus on preparation for mining work began to shift as instructors and participants recognized that more upgrading was needed and as participants became more interested in other fields such as tourism and community and band work. Above all, the projects provided opportunities for community members to improve their literacy skills and expand their horizons.

When I look back on this unique project my thoughts turn to what I might do differently next time. It is essential for the instructors and curriculum coordinator to visit the communities and conduct the initial needs assessments with learners before the program begins. Remote communities have unique needs which cannot be fully understood from an urban centre. Materials can be better developed or organized when the instructors have assessed their group in advance. In addition, staff training is critical for the learner-centred model. I recommend more time for workshops and discussion among instructors. Band leaders will also benefit by a presentation on the learner-centred model and how it differs from traditional teaching models. Finally, conference calls and faxes are useful forms of communication but more face-to-face site visits would help break down the distance barrier.

Each site delivered successful programs. The following narra-

tive is one instructor's reflections on his experience. He implemented the learner-centred model in the fullest sense and was impressed by its effectiveness.

I arrived at this isolated First Nation community of five hundred people on a Saturday afternoon. My class started Monday morning at 9 a.m., so I had one day to transform a storage room into a classroom. I found some long tables, chairs and, most importantly, a coffee pot — my students loved coffee. I was also equipped with a life skills binder, job readiness material and some mathematics and communications materials. I stapled colourful corrugated bulletin board paper to the walls and wrote snappy quotations on flip chart paper. I then arranged chairs in a circle. I was ready — or thought I was. Monday morning, my students didn't show up at nine o'clock. It took all day for the room to fill.

We started with sixteen participants, but shortly after the start of classes three students left to work at the mine. Of the thirteen remaining three were men and ten were women. These students ranged in age from nineteen to sixty-one years. There were single parents, grandparents, some married people and a few single individuals.

Before this program, many students had had negative experiences with formal education. A couple of the older students had never been to school except for a few months here and there. They lived in the bush and were busy making a living. Like many teens from remote communities, some of my students had been sent to high school in southern cities. They boarded with host parents who were mostly non-aboriginal, and who, though well-meaning, were not equipped to deal with the culture shock and loneliness of their visitors. Far from home, these young people often fell into the trap of drugs and alcohol. Many were sent home, and many never went back to school because the experience was so harsh.

Our program was learner-centred, individualized, and dependent on students developing and following through on their own work plans. Many students, especially the younger ones, found this process difficult because they were used to being told what to do. In school they were continually told to memorize information like "all the lakes and rivers in Bolivia," and the way my classroom worked was completely novel to them.

For instance, we used circle activities, although it took months for the group to get used to them; and they were never easy. However, one successful circle activity was passing imaginary objects to one another. We would name the object and the person we were passing it to as we pantomimed handing it over. As we got to know each other, we went from passing wiggly snakes and large spiders to full size pianos and live moose. We liked these kinds of silly games — they made us laugh. We laughed with each other a lot — if we felt embarrassed we laughed, and if we were happy we laughed too.

Discussions and role playing were more effective and enjoyable when they were informal. By informal I mean sitting comfortably, speaking when ready and allowing for flexibility — letting students direct the activity. This is how we learned about each other, how we grew to be more united and open.

In time it became easier for students to plan their weekly work, but at first I felt as if I was planning thirteen individual weekly programs. Although it was frustrating, the effort was worthwhile. Once they got some experience and confidence, the students learned to set specific goals with realistic time frames.

As students pursued their academic goals we had to deal with other challenges: some happy, some sad, some desperate. We dealt with abuse — physical, emotional, sexual, and alcohol/drug-related; we dealt with abandonment and suicide. These issues surfaced as we were discussing family life and the lifestyle of the reserve. Often the discussions were forced on us. Sometimes women came to class with black eyes and swollen faces. One evening a 10-year-old girl hanged herself from a tree limb in the

schoolyard. This event paralyzed the school and our class for a week. Everyone was in shock, but of course this was not the first suicide. There had already been so many.

Everyone in the class had lost a relative, friend or other loved ones in the last ten years. These issues and situations seemed to demand discussion, and though in the past, they were not much discussed, they were now being talked about openly. Students often brought up these topics in class, because, I believe, we had built up a good deal of trust together. People could express their opinions and feelings without judgement from me or the other students.

Once the winter road opened we lost some students because of the increased availability of alcohol and drugs; however, because the program was individualized, people were able to return to the program and pick up where they had left off. Students who faltered often remarked that they were relieved to be back in the program and worked hard to get back on track.

The program goal was to prepare students for jobs at the mine, 50 air miles away. We were to bring academic skills to roughly a grade 10 level or to a point where students could participate in health and safety training and apprenticeships.

Company representatives visited our class several times. The native employment coordinator helped us with interview skills by actually interviewing every student and making suggestions on an individual basis. A mining career night was organized and presented by the coordinator, the mine public relations manager and the mine training supervisor. They showed films about mining and explained the mining and smelting process. They encouraged the students and other community members to take a serious look at some of the well-paying jobs and apprenticeships. They encouraged them to get an education so they could access these opportunities. We also toured the mine and received first-hand knowledge of mine and mill operation. Many had never seen the mine before or understood the nature of the jobs offered there.

When the time came at the end of the program for job place-

ment, only four students took the opportunity for a job. The noise from the mill had scared some of us, as did going underground. Many of the women did not want to subject themselves to the constant harassment of the male camp-attendants. Drug and alcohol abuse at the mine was another deterrent to working there. In addition, as the students improved their skills and confidence, and learned more about the mining work, their interest in the mine waned. Six months into the program they started talking about getting their GEDs, going on to college, or looking around for other kinds of employment.

One of the problems we had to deal with was that our computers did not arrive until close to the end of the program. From the initial assessment I realized that only two of the students had any computer experience, and the rest were deathly afraid of the machines. I was fortunate to acquire three cast-off 286s, and after a few nights of frustrating work with *MS-DOS for Dummies* and Martin, the school principal, we had them up and running. After a few weeks the students were no longer afraid of computers. Each person learned by doing. Peer tutoring also proved to be effective. The director of education visited one day and was so impressed by our computer skills that he gave us his office computer. It was a 486 with a CD ROM drive and laser printer and it opened up a whole new vista for us. Now we were really word processing! What an inspiration to go from scared to writing perfect resumes with confidence. When our four Pentiums arrived, one of the grandmas in the class hooked it up. We listened to CDs, learned to cut, paste and merge, and had a taste of the Internet. Unfortunately we could not afford Internet service, and the poor phone lines were problematic, but we were still enthusiastic.

Communications skills were a major focus in our classroom. I wanted meaningful activities for the students so they could progress and enjoy learning language skills. The texts we had available were not very practical for us, so after some consideration I chose some useful books for reading and discussion, and decided

to study communications in large and small groups. I found the series *The Sacred Tree* in the school library, and we read it aloud and discussed it. I learned that because of the students' Christian upbringing, this was not an appropriate choice. We stopped using it after a discussion about spirituality and religion. The next book we tried was *Killing the Shaman*, a fascinating book about traditional culture versus the mainstream. Again, it was not appropriate, and I was frustrated. Every community is different: some embrace tradition more than others.

We used Bible quotations sometimes, with some success, but the most successful text was the Ontario driver's handbook. We read it aloud and silently, we studied and discussed it. We drew arrows and cars, and related the book to the community. The one and only First Nations constable authorized to give driving tests came and administered them for us. We opened the tests up to the community as well, with the result that eighteen people got their licenses, almost doubling the number of drivers in the community.

As a culmination of activities the students were presented with a choice of three projects: a newspaper, a book of their own short stories, or a book of history derived from interviews with elders. The newspaper was not chosen by enough students to make it a viable project so we concentrated on the two books. These projects were especially valuable because they combined so much of the work we had done in the program. The book of student short stories was the most popular project.

We sat down as a group and decided what kind of book we would make. We decided there would be a deadline for publication and that the book would be the best we could make with the materials and equipment we had to work with. The theme that was developed within the group was "Stories for Our Children."

The purpose of the project was to get the students to use their newly acquired language and writing skills to compose these stories. I wanted them to use their computer skills in word processing, including cut and paste, and put their hidden artistic abilities to

work on illustrations. We followed four writing steps: outline, rough copy, revised copy and final product. The outline was produced using a giant story web. Once I explained the concept of the web, we made several, and chose the best one. After writing the rough copy the students learned the value of proofreading and revision. Classmates proofread each other's work and gave each other ideas. One woman revised her story seventeen times before she was satisfied with it. The layout of pictures and text came next. After the pages were prepared they were photocopied and bound, complete with a front and back cover and a table of contents. A scanner would have been wonderful, to include colour in the books, but we settled for black and white.

This project generated a lot of documents that could be used in the students' portfolios. Most of the students had difficulty submitting their work either because they thought it was not good enough, or because they did not want to invest the effort into perfecting it. Then again, they might just have been waiting for me to ask them to recite the names of the rivers and lakes of Bolivia!

The students presented their publication to the community at their graduation. It was a proud moment when two class representatives presented the Chief and Council with a copy of *Stories for Our Children*. It was enthusiastically received and was passed from one reader to another all night. It was a triumph for my students, people who had not failed this time, but had demonstrated to their leaders and their families and friends that they could succeed.

I left the community on that high note, hoping that the program would continue. I hope I have given you a glimpse into the classroom and a sense of our problems and successes. We struggled as we learned, but we were happy. For me Monday was as good as Friday, and I would do it again in a minute, and this time better.

4

Clearly The Way To Go... In the Workplace

By Leah Morris

As a regional workplace education coordinator, my responsibilities included outreach, training, assessments and student-tutor coordination. Through outreach into the community, I learned about workplace needs and in 1990 I began marketing to workplaces in the Haldimand-Norfolk area.

I quickly realized that most employers do not recognize the literacy needs in their workplace. The challenge is to convince employers that our services are not only available, but also necessary to them. I usually approached the workplace through human resources personnel who are often more aware of the literacy needs in their workplace than management are. However, marketing strategies must be convincing enough to move discussion past human resources to the management level.

Getting a foot in the door — marketing approaches

The most successful strategy I have found is to use clear writing to demonstrate how effective communication can benefit the workplace. To assess the need for literacy upgrading and obtain buy-in from all the workplace players (such as management and union), before I enter a workplace I obtain samples of forms, memos, newsletters etc. and assess them for readability, clear writing style

and design. Once the assessment is complete and some of the materials rewritten according to clear writing principles, I meet with human resources, samples of clearly written materials in hand. Quite often the reaction is immediate and very positive. Within days, I am meeting with management, once again with clearly written documents in hand.

I know that clear writing is a useful marketing tool to get a foot in the door of a workplace, and I am also convinced that it is truly an effective communication tool, useful beyond the workplace into everyday life. The sales pitch to the employer should focus on the benefits to the workplace, but the sales pitch to the employees should focus on the development of personal skills. Management may see personal development as transferable and valuable, but in my experience the number one concern is the benefit to the workplace itself.

Once management agrees with the possible benefit of clear writing, the next step is to show the benefits of investigating literacy upgrading through a needs assessment. The needs assessment should examine the cultural and social factors within the workplace, skill and educational requirements, types of communication used within the workplace, initial and ongoing training available to employees, and technological changes which have occurred in the past few years. The analysis of the needs assessment will either prove or disprove the need for upgrading within that particular workplace.

Once I have completed the analysis of the needs assessment, I present my findings and recommendations to management, the union, employee representatives (in non-union workplaces) and human resources. At this point, management must make a decision as to its level of commitment. Will they offer upgrading to all employees or only to a few? Will employees have paid time for upgrading or will it be volunteer time? Will the cost of materials be covered by the employer? What type of program will be offered, small group or one-on-one? Together, we set timelines and goals for

the upgrading program. A word of caution: I have found that sometimes management wants results right away, but the goals cannot possibly be achieved within their timeline. I have to effectively sell timelines based on my experiences with other workplaces.

Workplace example 1: greenhouse

This workplace had a high population of Mexican Mennonites, who do not believe in formal education. Many of the employees were illiterate both in English and in their native tongue. Communication barriers were creating problems in the workplace; for example, written communication created problems and frustration for most of the workers. The language level of the employee handbooks and basic workplace information was suitable for university research papers, yet there was no minimum educational requirement for the greenhouse worker.

Clear communication was badly needed. While management recognized the cultural communication barriers, they were unwilling to take part in any type of internal clear writing training. They did, however, begin a basic literacy program available to all employees.

Before literacy upgrading could be effective, the communication barriers had to be dealt with. Clear writing provided one way of opening avenues of communication to allow learning to begin, and it became my responsibility, as the literacy provider. In the short term, this was effective, but in the long term, when funding ended and the program was no longer under my mandate, clear writing no longer occurred.

This company wanted the benefits of clear writing without having to train their staff. Management felt that because of high staff turnover, training was not useful. They felt that staff trained today would probably be gone tomorrow, and the company's investment in training would benefit another workplace. The only way I could ensure that clear writing remained accessible in this workplace was to put all rewritten materials onto computer disk and leave them with the personnel manager.

At this workplace, I rewrote many forms, including the employee handbook which presented the workplace benefits package, work ethics, rules and schedules. I designed three different handbooks, one each for full time staff, part time staff and seasonal staff. The human resources manager and her office staff gave input and suggestions around the development of these handbooks.

Due to the 90 per cent illiteracy rate and the 60 per cent ESL population in this workplace, I went beyond the usual clear writing principles in order to present information in a manner that was understandable to the majority of the workforce. At the bottom of each page in the handbooks I included a small dictionary which explained the meaning of important words. I also designed an orientation package with visuals as well as text.

The basic literacy instructors used the rewritten handbooks and clearly written forms as a basis for curriculum development specific to this workplace. They designed discussion activities around communication needs within the workplace and possible solutions to overcome communication barriers. They also used the classroom as a focus group to evaluate the effectiveness of clearly written materials by comparing original forms with the rewritten ones.

The results were very positive. Seven years after the project ended, this workplace continues to use the orientation package and handbooks that I designed. Despite this success, if I had the opportunity to begin the process with this workplace again I would approach things a little differently.

In the written contract with the workplace, I would include an agreement to train all employees who are responsible for written communication in clear writing and I would set the date of the workshop immediately. This formal commitment to training helps ensure that the clear writing training will indeed take place. I would also develop a clear writing committee which would be involved in the clear writing process, so that should formal training not occur, the knowledge and practical experience of clear writing would be accessible. The involvement of this committee would include

polling employees about communication needs, reviewing materials in the workplace and recommending materials to be rewritten. I know that many programs suggest a "train-the-trainer" format, but in the case of this workplace, there was so much racial tension that I am not certain "train-the-trainer" would have worked, at least not until there was some diversity training in place.

Workplace example 2: wire and cable manufacturer

This manufacturer not only bought into basic literacy upgrading, but also accepted clear writing with open arms. As I was waiting for my initial meeting to make my sales pitch to human resources, the training officer, union representatives and management, I noticed a huge poster signed by all employees of the company. When I realized that probably a number of employees had signed this agreement for "Quality Assurance" without understanding what they had signed, I rewrote the information.

The first question I asked in the meeting was, "Do you believe that all the employees who have signed your Quality Assurance statement understand what they have signed?" Management representatives were quick to state they were sure every employee understood what the Quality Assurance statement meant; however, the union representatives and human resources staff disagreed. I offered to present their statement as I had understood and rewritten it.

Original Quality Assurance Statement

Quality has to be defined as conformance to requirements,
not as goodness.
The system for causing quality is prevention, not appraisal.
The performance standards must be zero defects,
not "that's close enough."
The measurement of quality is the price of
non-conformances, not indexes.

My rewrite (which they adopted later on)

Quality means:

- following the guidelines
- looking ahead for possible mistakes
- doing it right the first time

Quality is measured by results, not numbers.

As soon as I presented my version of the Quality Assurance statement, they hired my organization not only to upgrade their employees, but also to train their staff in clear writing. Those trained included office staff, management, the union representatives, the training officer and the forepersons.

Three separate clear writing workshops, with ten to fifteen participants in each, were held during a three week period. To meet the scheduling needs of the workplace, workshops were held for each shift and included employees from all workplace sections (e.g. management, floor workers, secretaries). At the end of the three weeks, a focus group of participants came together to review workplace materials and discuss their clear writing needs.

The clear writing workshop itself was three hours long. I find that a half-day workshop is always received with greater enthusiasm than a full-day workshop. The cost in time and dollars involved in releasing staff for a full day is too great for many companies, especially smaller rural workplaces. Instructors who present full-day or longer clear writing workshops will probably wonder how effective a three-hour workshop can be. I have found it to work very well.

In the three hours, we cover the general tips of clear writing, using the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs paper on clear writing as a snapshot of the principles. There's no doubt that this is a workshop! Participants rewrite sentences, consider commonly used words and find clearer ways to express those words. They learn how to determine reading levels of materials

using the Fry Readability Test and Gunning Fog. The participants work in small groups to rewrite materials from the workplace. To re-emphasize the clear writing principles, the workshop concludes with the "Clear Writer's Hit Squad" video produced by Frontier College. Is this the end? No! This is just the beginning of clear writing in the workplace.

Follow-up continues via fax, phone and Internet. I remain in contact with the company until they have firmly established their clear writing skills. In some instances, companies have contacted me three to four years after their initial training. This manufacturing company assessed accident forms, machinery operating manuals, policy and procedure manuals, health and safety documents as well as their newsletter and memos. We maintained contact for two years after the completion of the project.

During the clear writing workshops I held for this company, people brought in materials from work and from the various organizations (e.g. church, Lions) they were involved in. The employer's training needs are achieved by giving skills to the employees which are used in the workplace, and employees find they gain skills they can use to benefit their personal life as well. In one workshop, an employee brought in a letter for her child's school PTA. By using the training in the workshop, she was able to learn the skills her employer wanted her to have, and was also able to prepare a clear piece of information that would go beyond the door of her workplace. Another participant was a volunteer at a hospital that was developing a "satisfaction" questionnaire for patients, and she was able to use the clear writing workshop to form a useable and clearly written questionnaire.

Advisory vs. Hands-on

My involvement in clear writing for this manufacturing company was more on an advisory role than the hands-on role I had in the greenhouse workplace. This type of involvement works best because the clear writing skills are refined within the workplace. In this case, the skills also benefited other plants belonging to this company. Two

years after the completion of my project with this workplace I was informed by the training officer that clear writing had become a workplace policy in all of the plant locations. In this case, "train-the-trainer" was successful, ensuring that clear writing continued long after the upgrading program was completed. The training officer offered his knowledge of clear writing to the other plant locations, resulting in the company-wide policy of clear writing.

One very time-consuming exception to the advisory role was the union contract agreement, which I rewrote. Although clear language contracts do exist, in this case many loopholes appeared when the legal jargon was replaced with clear language. In the end, the countless hours spent rewriting resulted in a useless document. The dynamics of this company, including downsizing turmoil, played a role in the decision by management not to allow the clearly written union contract agreement to be used.

Conclusion

As changes occur in the literacy field, providers are being asked to prepare business plans, which are, I think, an effective way of presenting an upgrading program and timelines to a company. Allow the employer to know what they can expect from you and be sure that both parties agree on the timelines and expected results. Indicate an evaluation process in your business plan. I evaluate the process every three months for the first year and then every six months if I am there longer. The form of evaluation I use is focus groups at all levels of employment (the floor worker through to management), and/or a one-on-one format. The evaluation looks at the effectiveness of the program design (small group, on-site, off-site, one-on-one); the timelines, to see if they are still appropriate (if necessary they are adjusted); and the goals set out by the company in the initial stages of the program, to see if they are still relevant.

If a company agrees to a business plan, they have in essence agreed to a training contract. My services continue as long as the company is willing to fulfil its role in the process.

If the company does not live up to the agreement, discussion is necessary to determine why the company is not working within the contract agreement and if possible, a new business plan can be negotiated. If I am not meeting the expectations of the company they have the right, based on the training contract, to terminate my services. Through the ongoing evaluation process, both the company and I are well aware of problems as they come up and usually ongoing evaluation ensures the contract is fulfilled by both parties — but there is always the possibility of surprises.

For me, clear writing has always been an effective way to open the door for other types of upgrading within the workplace. I have been involved in the design of basic literacy, numeracy, and English programs, and have referred companies to other trainers and programs to meet their specific needs. In each workplace I have entered, clear writing was the vehicle I used to get the company's attention and its buy-in to upgrading. Whatever approach you choose to get buy-in from the workplace for upgrading, I recommend something that clearly shows benefits to both the employer and employee.*

* *I would like to acknowledge and credit Barb Shipley (responsible for rewriting the Pesticide Workbook and co-developer of the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs "Clear Writing Fact Sheet") who trained me in the principles of clear writing and who also helped develop the workshop I now present.*

5

Communicating in a Diverse Workplace

By Judith Bond

As a training consultant for the last eight years, I have had the privilege and challenge of developing a broad range of training programs to meet the changing needs of employees and organizations. One of the greatest challenges workplace trainers face is to develop training that is accessible to individuals regardless of their language skills. The story that follows describes our experience in one organization.

Description of the training

"Communicating in a Diverse Workplace" is a three-hour workshop in which participants explore the values of individual culture, group culture and organizational culture. "Culture" here includes gender, age, ability, ethnicity, race, religion and all the areas of our lives that may reflect differences from others. The workshop addresses the issue of communication as messages filter through individual and group experiences.

The training was developed to respond to an identified need in many of the organizations we worked with. Over and over again, we saw assumptions being made about the communication structures in a company, a department or a production line. Often the message "receiver" was blamed for not understanding, when in fact

the "sender" was sending an unclear, culturally-biased message.

While the core training information remains the same, we add to and adapt the model according to the needs of the organization and the individuals who will be involved in the workshop. Through a variety of interactive training activities, participants, identify possible barriers to clear communication and develop strategies for clearer communication. Case studies introduced via video give individuals the opportunity to put the new information and strategies to work. We suggest that this training be co-facilitated. Each trainer brings his or her own diversity to the group along with personal stories and workplace examples. This model also ensures more active participation because there are two individuals "working the room" during group and pair activities.

Traditionally, this workshop is offered to employees who are at least at a supervisory level. Participants usually have fairly high-level listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. In 1997 we were given the opportunity to offer the training to individuals whose English language skills were not as well developed (ESL/low literacy).

Profile of "ABC Manufacturing"

ABC Manufacturing has been on a journey towards a high performance workforce for at least five years. The company produces several well-known household products and must meet stringent customer standards. It has high expectations of all its workers and uses self-directed work teams. The company introduced the concept and motto of "Learning a Living" when it began a process of change from a traditional hierarchy to a high performance organization. The company rewards useful ideas with cash, and rewards individuals for learning with ceremonies and certificates.

The company runs three shifts daily and two of those shifts run without supervisors or managers on site. The workforce is diverse. The largest number of front-line employees are from Jamaica and the other front-line employees are Asian and European. The man-

agement is primarily Canadian-born, English-speaking and white.

Rationale for Training

Over a long and evolving relationship with the organization, we developed and delivered a variety of training programs, including basic skills, math and WHMIS (Workplace Hazardous Materials Information System). Then the company asked us to do a company-wide survey looking primarily at communication processes and relationships. We identified two areas for further training:

- Clear Language and Design
- Communicating in a Diverse Workplace

In the survey we asked employees about diversity issues related to employment. An interesting picture emerged. Many employees expressed the opinion that certain cultural groups were treated differently and were given more opportunities than others. These perceptions had hardened into strong beliefs that were expressed in terms of cultural/racial bias and cultural differences around authority and time.

The organization asked us if we could design our training to meet the language needs of all employees. Instead of organizing training groups by language ability, rank, shift or department, we randomly selected four groups and assigned them to workshops. All employees were expected to attend. My co-facilitator Grace Nicholson and I were excited about the opportunity and the challenges, but were nervous about delivering the training to such a diverse group.

We knew from the organizational survey and from reported comments from participants in our other courses that there was a poor relationship between some supervisors, managers and front-line employees. In this organization, employees call managers the "white coats" because they tend to wear white lab coats instead of blue uniforms. The "us and them" perception of floor and front office is certainly not unique to ABC Manufacturing. It is all about power and shows itself in differences in dress, hours, and parking spots; in who speaks to whom; in which cafeteria or washroom an employee uses;

and in the use of titles for some and first names for everyone else. All of these differences existed and still exist in this organization.

In preparing the training, we needed to consider these issues as well as:

- cultural issues — respect for authority, risk-taking, loss of face
- language issues — level of English skills in reading, writing, listening and speaking
- organizational issues — power dynamics, management styles
- training issues — appropriate, accessible materials

Needs Assessment

We were fortunate in that both Grace and I were familiar with the organization. Although we had not done a workplace needs assessment, we had a great deal of information to draw on: a consultant's report on company operations, the survey, several training project reports, training needs assessments, document reviews, and personal acquaintance with many of the potential trainees.

Our knowledge of the company, along with several interviews with company personnel, gave us a very clear picture of the workforce at ABC Manufacturing. We knew that each of the four workshop groups would include senior management and office staff as well as front-line workers, some of whom had difficulty listening to and speaking English and/or reading and writing English. We knew that each group would have 22 to 25 participants for a total of 89 employees. We also knew that while the training was on company time, some individuals would be unwilling participants.

Our trainees ranged in skill levels. Some were functionally illiterate in their own language, there was a Vietnamese-trained surgeon who worked on a production line because of poor language skills, and others were well-educated individuals with few language difficulties. Through our years of working with the organization we knew which managers were liked and trusted and which ones were not. We knew who never volunteered for anything and who were willing to try anything.

Learning Objectives and Outcomes

Since this training was essentially an information and learning workshop about perceptions, awareness and behaviours, Grace and I outlined the following as workshop objectives:

- look at the reasons why people do things differently
- increase personal awareness of culture, gender and other differences
- increase awareness of the internal culture of ABC Manufacturing
- recognize the value of clear communication
- look at how misunderstandings occur in the workplace

We used a variety of activities to introduce information and concepts. Participants used this knowledge and problem-solving skills to discuss several workplace case studies. Learning outcomes were therefore:

- describe the misunderstanding or poor communication depicted in a video-based case study and suggest appropriate strategies for problem solving
- relate one piece of information from the workshop that will change the way you work

Training and Material Development

Agenda

Introductions and Objectives
R.O.P.E.S (the ground rules for the session: Respect, an Open mind, Participation, Experimentation, Sensitivity)
Culture Brainstorm
Workplace Culture
Strategies for Effective Communication
Supervising Differences (Video)
Evaluation

Normally we hand out a twenty-page workbook with extra reading and information about communication strategies. In this case, though, we decided to include much less written material, knowing that the language skills of the groups were diverse. We did not want to intimidate people with minimal reading and writing skills by putting stacks of inaccessible information in front of them. We handed out:

- agenda and objectives
- simplified work sheets
- a clear language version of the iceberg model of culture
- case studies including essential material only
  (all case studies had a visual and listening component to ensure understanding)
- strategic material rewritten into lists of important information
- a clearly written evaluation form

The extra information went into the Training Corner at the company. The Training Corner is an area in the lunchroom that is set aside for college calendars, Board of Education calendars, and any material related to learning. We always recommend that an organization promote lifelong learning. This is one strategy that has proven effective.

Delivery

In delivering the program, our first goal was to increase the comfort levels of participants. We gave everyone choices and worked to keep everyone involved. Instead of expecting all groups to record and share the brainstorming they did about culture and later on the mistakes that result from poor communication, we explicitly stated: "You may want someone to write the ideas down or if you want, just remember all your ideas to share with everyone. That's okay too."

We noticed that most tables had at least one person write down ideas. Some lists were not in English, some were poorly spelled, but participants were ready to share with the larger group when we

called them back. At this point in the exercise, I usually hang flip charts around the room. Instead, Grace and I put two easels at the front and did the note-taking as participants talked. We used clear language and printed the words; we avoided coded language: jargon, acronyms, short forms. We then posted these sheets.

As the first group activity, this set the expectations for the group. Participants relaxed visibly as they realized that although they had to read and write in the workshop, they were not expected to perform beyond their comfort levels. The next three sessions were easier as the grapevine informed participants of what to expect.

Grace and I used movement as a way of capturing and keeping attention and moving the activity along. Participants had two of us to focus on, and we were always writing, speaking, listening or standing back and observing the groups. The active learning techniques that we used also kept people involved. In the three hours (less a break) we used the following techniques:

- brainstorming (more than once)
- organizing information
- discussion
- mini-lecture
- case study
- role playing
- problem solving
- demonstration
- video
- story telling

One of the most powerful activities we did with these groups was a brainstorming activity which moved beyond personal and social culture to look at organizational culture. As Grace and I recorded, the large group defined the written and unwritten rules of their organization. They stated the mission statement in their own words, and were clearly familiar with the values and beliefs of

the organization. For example, each group paraphrased the statement that ABC Manufacturing "gets it right the first time." There was also an understanding of the idea of lifelong learning. In its own way, each group talked about the importance of continuous improvement. Senior managers in the groups later asked us for the worksheets from this session and made them into posters which were put up around the workplace.

Another successful activity stressed the importance of clear communication. This activity calls for volunteers, which is often difficult because participants do not like volunteering for the unknown. In this case we had to ask participants to help us with the activity. Grace was also a volunteer.

Paper Activity

Ask for five volunteers. Give each a sheet of paper. Tell them that their job is to close their eyes, listen carefully to all instructions and follow them. They have to keep their eyes closed and cannot ask questions. The others in the room observe. Have volunteers follow these instructions:

1. Fold the paper in half and tear off the right corner.
2. Fold the paper in half and tear off the right corner.
3. Repeat this step at least three times.
4. Open eyes and unfold the paper.

You should end up with five different designs. (To ensure that at least one is different, the co-facilitator volunteer folds the paper in half lengthwise. Most will fold the paper top to bottom.) Ask the observers what they saw and heard. This activity generates a lot of discussion around the importance of clear communication. Participants usually agree that while everyone heard the same instructions, they were not clear enough. They also agree that the volunteers should not be afraid to ask for clarification.

A manager who was not well-liked by the front-line employees asked how we got a particular employee to volunteer for this activity. According to the manager, this employee never volunteers and is seen as difficult — yet we had him involved and interested in what we were doing. I replied, "We asked him." The manager looked quite thoughtful (I really want to say gob-smacked) at such a simple strategy.

Since participants got really involved in the training and participated at their own comfort level, we never had to resort to translators in any of the sessions. Everyone had something to say or a story to tell. Participants from senior management were both surprised and shocked by some of the discussions. Several employees brought up specific examples when we brainstormed on workplace errors caused by poor communication. They also discussed the cultural differences around time and discipline that were a problem for some individuals and/or for the organization. We discussed both sides of the issue and developed strategies for change.

Evaluation

We used the video "Supervising Differences" as a measurement of how much participants had learned. We discussed and examined each of these four vignettes and developed strategies for problem solving the issue:

1. A worker is upset because he feels people are talking and laughing about him in a language he does not understand. This segment suggests techniques for managing conflict.
2. A supervisor embarrasses an employee by chastising her in front of others. The segment challenges the idea that we treat everyone the same way. The video suggests that we treat everyone equally, not the same. This generated some heat in discussion. Some in the group wanted everything, good and bad to be said in public, while other group members agreed that this would embarrass them. A senior manager in the group admitted that he needed to know more about the people

he worked with because he had made a lot of assumptions about what people were comfortable with.

3. A woman starts a new job in a non-traditional occupation. The comfort level of the supervisor and his orientation training are showcased as he starts a man and the woman in the same job.
4. In an office setting, a supervisor makes assumptions about a variety of people, based on familiar stereotypes. She is then shown to be totally wrong (e.g. the 'too-fragile' blind man is a marathon runner).

This is one of a series of videos we use in our communications training. We like to use this one because people recognize the situations from both sides: worker and supervisor. It has real meaning to their own situation.

Learners were asked to complete an evaluation form. We made it as simple as possible but we knew that not everyone would complete it (7 per cent did not respond). Some people completed the whole form, while others just completed the checklist and did not try to write answers.

Some responses from participants to the question "What information did you learn that you will use at work?"

- how to communicate effectively
- respect for others and their ideas, ideals and cultural differences
- how to work with different types of people
- better acquaintance with co-workers
- how to listen better

Reflections

When Grace and I met to debrief and examine the dynamics of the groups, we realized that one of the four stood out. This session had a higher number of managers and supervisors attending. In every other session the groups sorted out fairly equitably at their tables. However, in this one, the management group sat together and was

less involved in the session. The participants were Canadian-born and white, with one woman among the men. As a group they interjected "jokes" that would not be understood by most participants because of language level or cultural bias. We were able to stop the behaviour, but their attitude certainly affected the larger group. Participants were more reticent about responding in the larger group. Next time, we would use seat assignments to get a more equitable mix.

When Grace and I debriefed we were astounded at how positive the experience had been for us as trainers. With training of this sort, you do not often get a strong sense of a shift in attitude or behaviour. You usually know through feedback that people were interested, that they learned a lot (or a little) and that the training experience was good. At ABC Manufacturing, there was a noticeable shift. It was apparent that after the first session, people were more willing to enter the room and more willing to participate. We were approached after sessions and quietly thanked by some participants (from all levels of the organization).

One situation we heard described in two of the sessions was resolved when the two individuals involved in the dispute identified their own barriers to communication. In this case, a supervisor made assumptions about an employee in her department. She assumed that the worker "knew how things worked," which included all of the unwritten rules of Canadian workplaces as well as the written ones. ABC Manufacturing has a code of behaviour that is not unique. As with any expectations, if you don't tell someone what they need to know, you will generally be disappointed in their behaviour. In this case the issues centred around time and work scheduling. The two women had very different cultural beliefs about time. Once they became aware this, the supervisor communicated clearly the time lines for projects.

The evaluation form, comments during the training, our learners' participation level and our debriefing sessions were all used in our evaluation. The company met its goal of offering all employees

training that would improve communication, and the training certainly met the company definition of continuous improvement. The response from the organization was positive at every step of the training process.

As for the participants, they responded positively in an unfamiliar training situation to a topic that can create dissension unless people are willing to work together with good will. Everyone had a voice. The training techniques and activities we chose involved participants, yet enabled them to work at their skill level. All participants received a certificate of completion to add to their skills portfolio.

We enjoyed being part of this training and we continue to encourage companies to offer this kind of program throughout their organizations. As our workplaces increase in their diversity and their complexity, this workshop can be a useful tool for change.

6

Author & Editor Biographies

Mary Ellen Belfiore

Mary Ellen Belfiore is a teacher, writer and researcher in adult education as well as a consultant in workplace education. She began teaching adults 25 years ago in an ESL community program. Mary Ellen has taught ESL in a variety of settings and complemented her teaching with research and materials development. She was a consultant with the Workplace Education Centre of ABC CANADA offering direct service to employers and unions, as well as support to the field nationwide.

Mary Ellen is the author of *Understanding Curriculum Development in the Workplace* and *The Benefits of Participating in Collaborative Committees*. She is also the co-author of *Teaching English in the Workplace* and *English at Work: A Tool Kit for Teachers*.

Judith Bond

Judith is a training consultant with the Toronto District School Board (formerly the Etobicoke Board of Education). She has been with Workplace Training and Services (WTS) for eight years. In that time she has specialized in programs such as: Basic Skills Training, Team Building, Communicating In Diverse Workplaces, Improving Business Through Diversity, Communications Skills, and Training-the-Trainer (for the workplace).

As part of the WTS team, Judith has presented workshops at the national workplace literacy conference "Moving Forward," for Workplace/Workforce Equity and Basic Skills (W/WEBS) program coordinators, and two Train-the-Trainer programs in southern Ontario. She works as both a facilitator and a trainer in the public and private sectors of service and industry. As a life-long learner herself, she is firmly committed to workplace training and education where everyone involved learns.

Rebekah Courtney

Rebekah Courtney is an education consultant. Her recent work includes research and writing for adult literacy projects with the Ministry of Education and Training. Previously she taught in a college, developed curriculum for workplace and college programs, and administered a youth employment preparation program. She holds a master's degree in education and is currently studying international literacy.

Don Matthews

Don has lived and taught in the north for nine years. Most of his experience has been with middle year students, but after working with adult learners he found that he enjoys teaching adults best of all.

Born and raised on the prairies, Don lived both on a farm and in small-town Saskatchewan. After joyously tossing his books in the air at the front door of Eyebrow High on the last day of grade 12, he proceeded to gain dynamic work experience ranging from entry-level labour jobs such as store clerk, underground miner and truck driver, to retail and grain industry management. After pursuing a business career for fourteen years, living in four provinces, and accumulating a large family of daughters, he attended the University of Saskatchewan. He gained a B.Ed, majoring in Indian and Northern Education.

After several years of teaching, and because of his background and community involvement, Don was asked to manage some capital projects, including a community-wide sewer and water system,

and a beautiful brick high school complete with new teacherages for a large First Nations community. He returned to teaching with the attitude that adaptability may soon be the most important skill to have, both inside and outside the workplace.

Upon completion of his basic skills contract in a small First Nations community, Don returned to the prairies, and now lives in Moose Jaw. He coordinates a Youth Service Canada project funded by Human Resources and Development Canada and sponsored by the Great Trails Getaway Region, an organization encouraging and developing tourism in South Central Saskatchewan.

Leah Morris

Leah Morris worked for the Haldimand-Norfolk Literacy Council as the Haldimand/Workplace Coordinator for nine years. She is now the executive director of the Hamilton-Wentworth Adult Basic Education Association. Leah is a supervising trainer and an ESL trainer for Laubach Literacy Canada, the developer of the Alpha-Bet puppet show and colouring book, and a consultant and trainer in clear writing. She has been an advocate of clear writing principles for eight years and has shared her clear writing skills with a number of workplaces, high schools, social service agencies, church groups, and literacy providers.

Brian D. Nicholson

Brian is a training consultant with the Toronto District School Board's (Etobicoke) Workplace Training & Services Department. He has ten years of experience in workplace training, serving adult learners in both the public and private sectors, including organizations from the automotive, electronic, chemical, and consumer products sectors.

Brian has created and conducted training seminars on a variety of topics: "Current Practices in Today's Workplace: SPC, TQM, and ISO," "Continuous Improvement Skills Training," "Creative Program Design," Team Problem Solving," and "MathWorks: Math Skills for the Workplace."

He has a Combined Honours B.A. in English and Political Science from McMaster University.

Leo O'Rourke

Leo is a Safety Officer and instructor for adult safety training courses at Natural Resources Canada. Before that, he worked at the Central Experimental Farm doing plant research.

He has been involved in adult education since 1994, when he was selected as an instructor for a Basic Education for Skills (BEST) program at Agriculture Canada. His program was selected by the Ontario Federation of Labour for a literacy case study sponsored by the University of Ottawa. In addition, the program was recognized with a Team Excellence Award from Agriculture Canada's Director General.

Leo is involved in his community and was recognized with an Ontario Municipal Recreation Award from the Township of West Carleton for his volunteer work. He has also served as a member of the Culture, Parks, and Recreation Committee for the township.

ABC
CANADA

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 422 529 CE 077 102

AUTHOR	Johnston, Wendy
TITLE	Workplace Education Resources: An Annotated Bibliography.
INSTITUTION	ABC Canada, Toronto (Ontario).
PUB DATE	1998-00-00
NOTE	52p.
AVAILABLE FROM	ABC Canada, 1450 Don Mills Road, Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2X7, Canada; 416-442-2292; fax: 416-442-2293; e-mail: abccanada@southam.ca; World Wide Web: http://www.abc-canada.org
PUB TYPE	Reference Materials - Bibliographies (131)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Adult Basic Education; Adult Education; Adult Literacy; Annotated Bibliographies; Curriculum Development; *Education Work Relationship; Educational Policy; Educational Practices; Educational Research; Educational Resources; Foreign Countries; Literacy Education; Needs Assessment; *On the Job Training; Partnerships in Education; Program Development; Program Evaluation; Resource Materials; School Business Relationship; Training Methods; Training Objectives; Unions; *Workplace Literacy
IDENTIFIERS	*Canada

ABSTRACT

This annotated bibliography, which was developed for workplace program developers and practitioners, policy planners, researchers, and others interested in workplace education, lists 182 documents devoted to the workplace education field in Canada. Annotations are provided for 68 documents. The remaining 114 are listed as further readings. Documents are grouped into four main sections as follows: perspectives (general information, policy, surveys and critiques, research, critical views); partners (business, labor, partnerships); practice (good practice, program development, needs assessment, evaluation, curriculum development); and resources (clear language resources and other bibliographies and collections). A wide range of publication types are represented, including the following: anthologies; position papers; synthesis reports; conference proceedings; reports of research studies; essays; documents directed toward workers, practitioners, labor unions, and businesses; and project reports. Each subsection begins with a brief description of some of the issues identified by the literature. Each annotation contains some or all of the following: document title and authors; publisher; page length; year of publication; price; information about obtaining the document; summary of those portions of the document that are relevant to workplace education in Canada; perspective from which the document is written; and comments on the document's usefulness to specific categories of users. (MN)

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Bibliography

By Wendy Johnston

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Workplace Education Resources: An Annotated Bibliography

ABC CANADA

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INTRODUCTION

ABC CANADA's Workplace Education Centre is pleased to be able to contribute this annotated bibliography to the workplace education field in Canada.

One of the Centre's mandates is to collect and disseminate information for the field. We do this in many ways, both formal and informal. Our newsletter *Literacy at Work* as well as our research papers and program development manuals are good examples of this function.

The workplace education field in Canada is about ten years old. Over the last decade, an amazing amount of work has been done in many areas to build the field's organizational capacity. The work done by different levels of government, business and labour, as well as workplace program developers and practitioners has laid the basis for an increasing level of sophistication in the discussions about issues in this field. These discussions have been largely characterized by a respect for, and appreciation of, the different experiences and concerns of different groups.
In preparing this bibliography, we wanted to reflect that diversity. We also wanted to focus on Canadian materials, while not excluding resources from other countries. Canadian materials are marked with a maple leaf.

This bibliography is for workplace program developers and practitioners, policy planners, researchers and those who are interested in the important issues in the field.

The many people who are working in the field often do not have the resources or opportunity to write about their experiences, the lessons they have

learned and what this means for the future. In Canada, there has been little academic research that is connected to the workplace field. But there have been other opportunities to discuss issues. Two indispensable anthologies have been produced:

1) Basic Skills for the Workplace, edited by Maurice Taylor, Glenda Lewe and James Draper, and

2) Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape, edited by Maurice Taylor.

These two volumes present a range of experiences and thinking about the field.
The 1995 and 1997 Workplace Consultations, sponsored by the National Literacy Secretariat and ABC CANADA, have been another very useful forum for exchange, where invitees have an opportunity to discuss specific issues of relevance to the field.

How to Find Information in this Bibliography

This annotated bibliography is divided into four main sections:

Perspectives:
- General Information
- Policy
- Surveys & Critiques
- Research
- Critical Views

Partners:
- Business
- Labour
- Partnerships

Practice:
- Good Practice
- Program Development
- Needs Assessment
- Evaluation
- Curriculum Development

Resources:
- Clear Language Resources
- Other Bibliographies & Collections

At the beginning of each subsection is a brief description of some of the issues identified by the literature. Each subsection includes four to six annotated entries, with information about obtaining these items. As well, a list of materials for further reading is included, with an indication in brackets of where the item can be borrowed. The "See Also" notation means that related material can be found in other subsections of the bibliography.

ABC CANADA's collection of over 650 titles, including all the items in this bibliography, is housed at Alpha Ontario (See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing these items). The Centre for Literacy in Quebec also lends materials and may have some of the items annotated in this Bibliography.

Your local workplace education providers may also have resource collections. We encourage you to consult *Workplace Education in Canada: A Listing of Providers* produced by the Workplace Education Centre for organizations in your area that may lend or sell related materials.

Although this is an English bibliography, every effort was made to indicate if an item is available in French.

Most of the annotations were done by Wendy Johnston, based on her experience over 10 years of involvement in the field. A few annotations were borrowed (with permission) from Julian Evetts and Peter Sawchuk, who have worked on other annotated bibliographies (See section on Other Bibliographies & Collections.)

A reference group assisted Wendy in the development of the bibliography. We extend our thanks to the following people for their extensive feedback and assistance:
Marjorie Davison; Lynda Fownes; Tamara Levine and Sue Turner.

PERSPECTIVES

General Information:

The workplace education field in Canada has its roots in the meeting of two different traditions: adult education and workplace training. The following materials illustrate the different contexts and concerns that meet in the workplace education field.

Putting the Pieces Together: Toward a Coherent Transition System for Canada's Labour Force

Canadian Labour Force Development Board
Task Force on Transition into Employment
41 pages
1994

This significant document offers a comprehensive and balanced view of "employability" and employment. Their model of employability includes not only skills, attitudes and knowledge of the job seeker, but also the economy and labour market into which he or she must fit.
(Thanks to Julian Evetts for this annotation.)

Category: General Information
ISBN: 1-895813-31-X
Available from: Canadian Labour Force Development Board
66 Slater Street, Suite 1204
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5H1
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FAX: (613) 230-7681
e-mail: jsevigny@clfdb.ca
website: www.clfdb.ca
Price: free, but limited copies are available

"Reflections on Education in the Workplace" in Basic Skills for the Workplace

Draper, James A.
Taylor, Maurice; Lewe, Glenda; Draper, James A., editors
13 pages
1991

The author reflects on developments in the (then) new workplace education field from the point of view of lifelong learning. Making an argument for a holistic view, Draper says, "It is impossible to bring to work only the working part of one's self, ignoring one's other roles such as friend, parent, daughter, consumer and spouse." He challenges all those involved in workplace education to see themselves as "providers of learning opportunities," who appreciate the different components of learning including "the affective (feelings, attitudes and values), the cognitive (content and subject-matter) and the psycho-motor (basic skills of communicating, including listening, reading and writing)." Addressing the broadening definition of basic skills, he encourages programs to include the learning process itself as a part of workplace programs. He examines the difference between education and training, as well as the political realities of power in the workplace. Other sections address philosophy, policy and partnerships. He also engages in an extended discussion of the importance of research, pointing out that most programs already engage in research when they do needs assessments and evaluations.

Category: General Information
Research
ISBN: 0-921472-06-4 OUT OF PRINT
Can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario. See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.

Workplace Literacy and Basic Skills

Folinsbee, Sue
National Literacy Secretariat (NLS)
December 1990; updated December 1994
8 pages
1994

A straight forward, clearly organized overview of workplace basic skills. The NLS publication answers the following questions in a clear and readable way, without over-simplifying the issues:

- What are workplace literacy and basic skills?
- Workplace literacy and basic skills: Evolving terminology
- Why are workplace literacy and basic skills important?
- What are some key factors in setting up workplace education programs?
- Who delivers workplace education programs?
- Getting started: What should you do first?
- What are some different ways workplace basic skills needs can be addressed?
- Important things to do when setting up a workplace education program?
- What to avoid when setting up a workplace education program?

Category: General Information
Program Development
Available from:
The National Literacy Secretariat
Human Resources Development Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1K5
Telephone: (819) 953-5280
FAX: (819) 953-8076
Available on-line from http://www.nald.ca

"Workplace Basics in the 1990s: Critical Issues and Promising Practices" in Workplace Learning

Folinsbee, Sue
Spikes, W. Franklin, editor
11 pages
1995

This is one of eight articles addressing issues surrounding workplace learning programs. The focus of this article is collaborative workplace education – an approach that "involves workers in program planning and decision making" and which "works to marry individual and organizational needs." The author spends some time discussing how we conceptualize literacy, identifying four different definitions: "(1) a set of skills, such as reading and writing; (2) tasks, for example, taking minutes at a meeting; (3) social practices, which could include how teams communicate and make decisions, and; (4) critical reflection and empowerment through which people, individually and collectively, take action to address important issues." She also discusses the difficulties in using terms such as "literacy" or "basic skills." A brief history of workplace education in the U.S. and Canada draws out some of the important differences in the two national experiences and policies. The also briefly discusses both the functional context approach and its critics. The author discusses five critical issues in the workplace field:

- Financial and Organizational Commitment to Training and Education
- In-depth and Comprehensive Evaluations of Workplace Program
- Balanced Emphasis on Worker Skills
- Challenge to the Deficit Model: Promoting a Positive, Healthy Approach
- Alternatives to the Quick Fix

Category: General Information
Good Practice
ISBN: 0-7879-9937-7

Available from:
Jossey-Bass Inc.
350 Sansome Street
San Francisco, California 94104-1342
Telephone: (415) 433-1767
website: http://www. josseybass.com
Price: $22.00 U.S.

Basic Skills for the Workplace

Taylor, Maurice C., Lewe, Glenda R., Draper, James A. editors
514 pages
1991

This is the earliest Canadian anthology on workplace education. It is divided into four sections:

- Understanding the Need for Workplace Literacy
- Identifying Workplace Training Needs
- Examples of Practice in Workplace Basic Skills Training
- Discovering Approaches for Program Development

Overall, the anthology represents the diversity of the Canadian field, including articles by labour and business authors, program developers and practitioners.

Category: General Information
ISBN: 0-921472-06-4 OUT OF PRINT
Can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.
See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.

Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape

Taylor, Maurice C., editor
412 pages
1997

The most recent anthology on the Canadian workplace education field, this book illustrates

the growing sophistication of the field. It is organized into four parts:

- Optimizing Partnerships and New Linkages
- Enhancing the Practice of Basic Skills
- Sustaining Current Programs in the Field
- Evaluating, Assessing and Conducting Research

As with the previous anthology, the diversity of the field in Canada is represented by authors from labour, business and education sectors.

Category: General Information
ISBN:0-921472-28-5
Available from:
Culture Concepts
6 Ashmount Crescent
Toronto, Ontario M9R 1C9
Telephone (416) 245-8119
FAX: (416) 245-3383
e-mail: cultureconcepts@sympatico.ca
website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

FURTHER READING:

"Understanding the History and Definitions of Workplace Literacy"* in *Basic Skills for the Workplace
Askov, Eunice & Aderman, Betty
(OUT OF PRINT. See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.)

Understanding Lessons Learned in Employee Basic Skills Efforts in the U.S.: No Quick Fix
Jurmo, Paul
(Alpha Ontario)

Creating and Learning Culture: Work and Literacy in the Nineties
National Literacy Secretariat
(National Literacy Secretariat)The Fifth Discipline: The Art & Practice of the Learning Organization: A Conversation with Peter Senge
(Alpha Ontario)

Continuous Learning for Continuous Improvement or Basic Skills, Worker Empowerment and High Performance Work Organizations: Why You Can't Have One Without the Other
Stein, Sondra
(Alpha Ontario)

Workplace Basic Skills Training
Taylor, Maurice; Shohet, Linda & MacLeod, Carole
(Centre for Literacy)

POLICY:

Workplace basic skills have been a public policy issue in Canada for the last ten years. With the establishment of the National Literacy Secretariat in 1988, the field has grown to involve most provincial and territorial governments. The reports on the 1995 Policy Conversation and the 1997 Workplace Literacy Consultation are useful snapshots of the concerns in the field and their impact on policy. Two pieces from the U.S. are also included to contrast and to compare with the Canadian experience.

Reinventing the NWLP

Jurmo, Paul et al
13 pages
1994

The National Workplace Literacy Program (NWLP) is an initiative of the U.S. Department of Education. This document, written by a group of progressive workplace developers and educators, makes recommendations to strengthen the NWLP, based on their extensive experience in the field. The authors critique some of the underlying assumptions of the NWLP, including its emphasis on functional context learning. The authors suggest a new model which: "defines employee basic skills as more than mastering of literacy tasks developed by others, but as a broad range of knowledge, thinking and communication skills which workers need to participate actively in the continuous improvement of the organization and their own lives; encourages workers to develop an ongoing interest in learning for the future rather than just for their immediate jobs; ensures that workers see learning activities as meaningful rather than imposed; links basic skills activities more effectively to other education, training and organizational development opportunities; ensures that organizations continue to provide basic skills supports after federal seed money ends; and provides multiple kinds of support to enable workers to develop the particular skills and knowledge they need." Another theme of the paper is the need for American companies to move to a high performance model based on employee participation and the continuous improvement of the organization and workers' lives.

Category: Policy
Good Practice
Available from:
Paul Jurmo
Literacy Partnerships
14 Griffin Street
East Brunswick, New Jersey, USA 08816
Telephone: (732) 254-2237
FAX: (732) 254-2070

10

Highlights of Federal Government Training & Literacy Initiatives (1966-94)

MacLeod, Carol
ABC CANADA
22 pages
1994

This is a synthesis of a more detailed research report commissioned by ABC CANADA on the evolution of federal policy on training and literacy. Noting that in the 1960s and 1970s "Canada fed on the skills of the rest of the world; immigration brought two million newcomers." The author goes on to discuss the extensive documentation of training carried out in the 1980s, "laying the foundation for the crisis-like atmosphere surrounding training that existed in the early 1990s." The 1990s, according to the report, have been characterized by a "recognition that government must play a facilitative role in stimulating private sector training, as opposed to being the primary source of training."

Category: Policy
Research
ISBN: OUT OF PRINT
Can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.
See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.

A Policy Conversation on Workplace and Workforce Literacy: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow

National Literacy Secretariat (NLS)
57 pages
1995

This report details the results of meetings held in Ottawa in the spring of 1995. Workplace trainers, business people, union representatives and NLS staff gathered to discuss the state of workplace provision in Canada. All participants were invited guests. The design of the policy meeting was almost as interesting as the content. The gathering itself was unusual in that it brought together key players from all

groups with a stake in workforce development – business, labour, education and government. This "partnership" approach is very much in line with NLS philosophy and one of the reasons that NLS initiatives are so successful. The "past" section of the conversation was intended to review developments to date. The "present" tense section gave participants a chance to reflect on where the field is now and the key questions which must be faced. Based on these two sections, delegates were asked to speculate on what approaches might advance workplace literacy in the future. Although no specific policy recommendations were asked for, there was general endorsement of the direction that the NLS has taken over the last five years and consistent calls to integrate workplace literacy and job training more closely.
(Thanks to Julian Evetts for this annotation.)

Category: Policy
Good Practice
Available from:
National Literacy Secretariat
Human Resources Development Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1K5
Telephone: (819) 953-5280
FAX: (819) 953-8076
e-mail: nls@fox.nstn.ca
website: http://www.nald.ca/nls.htm
Price: free
This is a bilingual version.

Consultation on Workplace Literacy, June 1997: A Report

National Literacy Secretariat
53 pages
1997

The objective of this second consultation on workplace literacy organized by the National Literacy Secretariat was to develop a list of priorities for workplace literacy practitioners, researchers in the area, workplace literacy coordinators and provincial/territorial government representatives. Both national priorities and sector-based priorities were identified.

- The labour sector identified priorities related to raising awareness among central labour bodies; developing program goals that reflect workers' needs; and identifying financing models to ensure program sustainability.
- The government sector identified priorities related to: legitimizing workplace literacy/education with government and education systems; developing partnerships and linkages; and developing an articulated system that includes prior learning assessment-based standards, certification for practitioners and on-going evaluation.
- The business sector developed priorities to: ensure a sustainable standard of living and growth while addressing the issue of continuous improvement; develop a skilled workforce and maintain a balance between technological change, the environment and the social impact on the workforce.
- The research sector's priorities included: actions to link researchers, practitioners and consumers into an effective team; novel and innovative ways to disseminate research; creating a research agenda that integrates the knowledge base of literacy-related research.
- The sector representing joint and national groups identified priorities related to: finding adequate resources for basic skills; developing indicators of a genuine level of commitment by business and labour; and developing a clear agenda, goals and planning for the delivery of programs.
- The sector representing practitioners and coordinators identified goals related to: improving the practice, professional development and networking opportunities for the field; challenging existing conceptual frameworks; repositioning "literacy with all stakeholders"; and becoming industry problem solvers.

This document is a very useful snapshot of a developing field in Canada that already has at least 10 years of experience.

Category: Policy
Good Practice
Available from:
National Literacy Secretariat
Human Resources Development Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1K5
Telephone: (819) 953-5280
FAX: (819) 953-8076
e-mail: nls@fox.nstn.ca
website: http://www.nald.ca/nls.htm
Price: free
This is a bilingual version.

Workplace Education: Voices from the Field

U.S. Department of Education
58 pages
1992

This document represents the proceedings from the National Workplace Literacy Program Project Directors Conference in September 1991. Representatives from 39 programs funded by the Department of Education in the second cycle of the National Workplace Literacy Program gathered to analyze their experiences. A number of important themes emerged that are discussed at length in the document:

- Partnership and organizational principles
- Learning system issues, including staff development and management, recruitment, assessment and curriculum development
- Evaluation methods
- Program policy direction

Category: Policy
Good Practice
Program Development
Evaluation

Available from:
Division of Adult Education and Literacy
Office of Vocational and Adult Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue SW
Washington, DC, USA 20202-7240
Telephone: (202) 205-9872

FURTHER READING:

Workplace Literacy Projects 1995

National Literacy Secretariat
(National Literacy Secretariat)

Organizing Adult Literacy and Basic Education in Canada

Movement for Canadian Literacy
(Alpha Ontario)

SURVEYS & CRITIQUES:

National and international surveys have played an important role in drawing attention to basic skills needs and in keeping the issue on the public agenda. However, there is also a growing debate about how literacy is defined in these surveys and what role it plays in other social issues. There are at least two different approaches – the "autonomous" model and the "social context" model, reflected in the following annotations.

12

Working Papers on Literacy No. 1

Centre for Literacy
25 pages
1997

This document is a collection of three critiques on the International Adult Literacy Survey compiled by the Centre for Literacy at Dawson College in Montreal, Quebec. Two schools of thought are represented in this Working Paper – the "autonomous" model and the "social context" model. The three contributors are: Harvey Graff, a professor of history at the University of Texas who has studied and written about literacy for more than 20 years; Brian Street, a professor at King's College at the University of London who is known for his ethnographic studies on multiple literacies; and Stan Jones, a professor in the School of Linguistics and Applied Language Studies at Carleton University in Ottawa, who was the primary consultant on Statistics Canada's 1989-90 Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities and the International Adult Literacy Survey.

These three academics make interesting points about how to define literacy or literacies; how they can be measured and; what are the policy implications of surveys such as International Adult Literacy Survey.

The debate continues in the pages of the Centre for Literacy's newsletter, *Literacy Across the Curriculum*.

Category: Surveys & Critiques
Available from:
The Centre for Literacy
3040 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, Quebec H3Z 1A4
Telephone: (514) 931-8731
FAX: (514) 931-5181
Available on line at the Centre's website:
http://www.nald.ca/litcent.htm
Price: (bound copy) $6 in Canada; $7 in the U.S.; $8 overseas

"Effective Functioning in Daily Life: A Critique of Concepts and Surveys of Functional Literacy" in *Foundations of Literacy Policy in Canada*

Heap, James L.
Norris, Stephen P. & Phillips, Linda M., editors
8 pages
1995

This essay begins with the statement: "Definitions and surveys of functional literacy are unsatisfactory." The author proceeds to explain his thesis that such definitions "do not encompass the metacognitive and practical reasoning required for rational, successful functioning in daily life." The first part of the paper addresses some conceptual issues, while the second part analyzes the structure of American and Canadian surveys on literacy. The author concludes that: "We should stop using the phrase 'functional literacy'. If we wish to denote its referent we can speak of text-based functioning . . . . Tests of functioning in society are not tests of people's ability to function effectively on daily tasks."

Category: Surveys & Critiques
Available from:
This article can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario. See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.

Reading, But Not Reading Well: Reading Skills at Level 3

Jones, Stan
22 pages
1993

This report begins with a brief discussion of how reading skills were measured in the "Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities," then considers at some length the reading performance of the Level 3 groups. Level 3 readers were defined as: Canadians at this level can use reading materials in a variety of situations, provided the

material is simple and clearly laid out, and the tasks involved are not too complicated. While these people generally do not see themselves as having significant reading difficulties, they tend to avoid situations requiring reading. Finally it examines some of the social characteristics of this category.

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e-mail: nls@fox.nstn.ca
website: http://www.nald.ca/nls.htm
Price: free
French version also available.

"A Critique of Literacy in a Changing Society" in *Canadian Review of Social Policy Issues, Issue 26*

Overton, James
9 pages
1990

This paper offers a critical appraisal of the report "Literacy in a Changing Society" (1989) issued by the Newfoundland government-appointed Advisory Committee on Literacy. The author examines the report's analysis of the nature, causes and consequences of the problem in Newfoundland as well as the report's proposals for dealing with this problem. The author begins by taking a look at the "Politics of Reports," examining the reasons why such a report was commissioned at that time. He then takes a look at the meaning of literacy and its connection to social problems. The next section examines what causes illiteracy. Finally, the author looks at the recommendations of the report.

Category: Surveys & Critiques
Available from:
Can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.
See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.)
ISBN: 0-660-17288-7
Available from:
Statistics Canada
Order only line: 1-800-267-6677
website: http://www.statcan.ca
Price: $10.00

Literacy, Economy and Society: Results of the First International Adult Literacy Survey

Statistics Canada
1995

The International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) was organized to gather comparative data about adult literacy in seven industrialized countries. It was a massive effort and drew on the research expertise of seven national governments, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the European Union and UNESCO. It is the first time that researchers have directly tested large samples of adults from each participating country using scales which allow international comparisons across different languages and cultures. Statistics Canada managed and coordinated the project.

The methodology used for IALS follows those used by the Educational Testing Service (ETS, 1986) in its study of the literacy of young adults, and by Statistics Canada (1991) in its study of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities. In this survey, as in the two cited above, three scales are used to measure ability in three domains. The first domain, prose literacy, includes the knowledge and skill to understand and use information in continuous texts such as editorials and news stories. Document literacy describes the skills and knowledge needed to locate and use information contained in a variety of document formats – maps, schedules, payroll slips and entry forms. Lastly, quantitative literacy refers to the skills and

knowledge required to apply arithmetic operations to numbers embedded in printed formats. Completing an order form or balancing a chequebook are typical tasks requiring quantitative literacy. Individual scores on the scales range from zero to 500, but for discussion purposes the scale is divided into five empirically determined literacy levels. Each level implies the ability to carry out particular sets of adult reading tasks. At Level 1, individuals are able to read and interpret only short selections of familiar text, while at Level 5, they can read dense and complex texts which often require considerable inference and specialized knowledge.

The International Adult Literacy Study validates earlier studies which showed that many Canadians have limited literacy. About 40 per cent of the population fall within Levels 1 and 2 on all literacy scales. People at or below these levels of literacy will have great difficulty adjusting to a future economy which offers only jobs requiring high levels of reading and writing ability.

There are some interesting differences between workers in different countries. German workers read more than Canadian workers. Germans reported reading a variety of workplace document at rates 10 per cent to 15 per cent higher than Canadian workers. Europeans generally scored higher on the document literacy scale and lower on the prose scale than their North American counterparts.

The study confirms what most workplace educators and trainers know already: literacy is not a one-time accomplishment, but a skill which must be exercised or it will be lost. School provides a foundation for adult literacy, but without continued use, literacy decreases. In Germany, literacy levels continue to increase after school leaving, with greater numbers of people at higher reading levels ten years after they finished school. In the United States, the proportion of people at the lowest literacy level increases with age. In Canada also, older people have lower skills than younger people with similar educational attainment. The study indicates that maintaining a high degree of literacy is a challenge not met by some individuals and underlines the need for recurrent training to maintain skills.
(Thanks to Julian Evetts for this annotation.)

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Available from:
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Human Resources Development Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1K5
Telephone: (819) 953-5280
FAX: (819) 953-8076
e-mail: nls@fox.nstn.ca
website: http://www.nald.ca/nls.htm
Price: free
French version also available.

Literacy Skills for the Knowledge Society: Further Results from the International Adult Literacy Survey

Statistics Canada
Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
Human Resources Development Canada
195 pages
1997

This report is a supplement to the first International Adult Literacy Survey (IALS) released in December 1995. This report enlarges upon some of the findings from the first report by offering further analysis and includes new data from five additional countries – Australia, Belgium (Flanders), Ireland, New Zealand and the United Kingdom.

The first IALS report offered a sophisticated definition of literacy as "the ability to understand and use printed information in day-to-day activities, at home, work and in the community." The new analyses and new data in this second report underscores the point that understanding and using print information effectively is the measure of a literate society.

For example, one significant new analysis shows that some countries – the United States and the United Kingdom in particular – provide income rewards for skills as equally, or nearly equally, as they do for education credentials in the labour market. In the knowledge-based society, then, which is characterized by competitive job markets, technological growth, information-based economies and the challenge of rapid change, those with skills will be rewarded as well as those with credentials. This carries implications for adult education providers as they determine which skills are demanded in our society and how to accredit those skills.

Another provocative analysis demonstrates the difference in IALS test scoring between men and women. When education attainment is controlled, men outscore women on the quantitative scale 100 per cent of the time, though in the U.S. there is the least difference between the genders. Women outscore men on the prose scale in every country except Poland. Men outscore women on the document scale, except in the U.S. Why these gender differences exist is still under research, but certainly our education system at primary and secondary levels might offer insights and recommendations.

The theme, that many stakeholders have contributions to make to the development of a strategy and policies supporting a literate society, is repeated in the conclusions presented after each of the four chapters and is addressed in detail in a separate section. What is clear is that there is no one easy answer but that "only if social, economic and education policies converge in their attention to literacy issues will countries be able to develop true cultures of lifelong learning."

The new analyses contained in this report, along with the data from additional countries, confirm the initial patterns in the findings from the first report and support the assertion that "literacy is a powerful determinant of an individual's life chances and quality of life." *(Thanks to Nancy Steel for this annotation.)*

Category: Surveys & Critiques
Policy
Available from:
Statistics Canada
Order only line: 1-800-267-6677
website: http://www.statcan.ca

SEE ALSO: **CRITICAL VIEWS**
LABOUR

FURTHER READING:

"Adult Literacy Surveys: A Trans-border Comparison"
Fagan, William
Journal of Reading, 38 (4) 1995
(Alpha Ontario)

Literacy in Canada: A Critique of the Southam Report
Fagan, William
Alberta Journal of Educational Resources 34 (3) 1988
(Alpha Ontario)

Reading for the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada
Government of Canada
Statistics Canada

Guide to Literacy Levels on the Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities
Jones, Stan
Statistics Canada

An Examination of the Adult Performance Level Project and its Effects upon Adult Literacy Education in the United States

Kazemek, Frances E.
Lifelong Learning 9 (2) 1985
(Alpha Ontario)

Adult Literacy: Results of a National Study

Statistics Canada
Statistics Canada

Employee Training: An International Perspective

Statistics Canada
1997
Statistics Canada

Reading the Future: A Portrait of Literacy in Canada 1996

Statistics Canada
Statistics Canada

Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities: Survey Overview – Numeracy Skills

Statistics Canada
Statistics Canada

Survey of Literacy Skills Used in Daily Activities: Survey Overview – Literacy Skills

Statistics Canada
Statistics Canada

Monographs Connected to IALS

Statistics Canada
(As these monographs are being published over the next few years, check with your local StatsCan office or their website http:/ www.statcan.ca)

The APL and the NALS: The Second Coming of the Government/Educational Contractor Juggernaut in Adult Literacy Education

Sticht, Thomas G.
Institute for the Study of Adult Literacy,
Mosaic: Research Notes on Literacy 4 (1) 1994
(Alpha Ontario)

Putting Literacies on the Political Agenda

Street, Brian
Research and Practice in Adult Literacy, RaPAL Bulletin (13) 1990
(Alpha Ontario)

Workshops on "Literacy, Economy and Society"

The Western Canada Workplace Essential Skills Training Network (Wwestnet)
1996 Wwestnet
(Alpha Ontario)

RESEARCH:

There has not been a lot of academic research related to the workplace education field in Canada. Research has tended to reflect more practical concerns, like marketing workplace education or developing nation-wide literacy task analyses of different occupations. Most program developers and practitioners have engaged in research in the form of needs assessments and evaluations, but this has not yet developed into a sophisticated research wing of the field.

National Training Survey

Canadian Labour Market and Productivity Centre
94 pages
1991

This report presents the main findings of the 1991 National Training Survey, which was "designed to provide up-to-date information on the nature and extent of training in the private sector in Canada, as well as related opportunities and barriers." Some of its major findings include:

- Organizations in the manufacturing sector were most likely to provide structured training, with 88 per cent of organizations participating.
- Overall, 36 per cent of private sector employees received structured training.
- The average employee received 39 hours of structured training in the reported year.
- Orientation training was provided by the largest proportion of firms at 61 per cent, followed by computer training at 57 per cent, health and safety training at 44 per cent and managerial training provided by 40 per cent of organizations.
- One of five organizations that provided training had specific budgets for training expenditures and one in six organizations had a formal training plan.
- Nineteen percent of organizations that operated with a collective bargaining agreement reported providing training under the terms of the agreement.
- Larger organizations (those with over 100 employees) were much more likely than smaller firms to report that they were unable to do all the structured training they wanted.

Category: Research
ISBN:
Available from:
Canadian Labour Market & Productivity Centre
Address: 55 Metcalfe Street, Suite 1500
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6L5
Telephone: (613) 234-0505
FAX: (613) 234-2482
e-mail: clmpc@magi.com
website: http:// www.clmpc.ca
Price: $10.00

The Impact of Basic Skills Programs on Canadian Workplaces

Long, Ellen
ABC CANADA
40 pages
1997

This study indicates that "basic skills programs are having a dramatically positive impact on workplaces across Canada." Based on the results of telephone interviews with 86 individuals from 53 workplaces, the study includes a diverse range of workplace types and sizes from both large and small communities. Respondents were asked to describe the motivation of their workplaces for starting basic skills programs; the ways in which their workplaces organize the programs; and the impact of the programs on their workplaces. An overwhelming number of the respondents saw a positive impact in a variety of areas from increased confidence to improved labour relations and increased productivity. Among the barriers identified to setting up basic skills programs were: "perceived cost; lack of awareness of the need for a program; literacy needs being hidden by employees; companies not feeling responsible; lack of understanding about the outcome of programs; and mistrust between labour and management." ABC CANADA hopes that the study will provide information for effective, peer-based promotional strategies that will be useful in a broad range of contexts.

Category: Research
Available from:
ABC CANADA
1450 Don Mills Road

Don Mill, Ontario M3B 2X7
Telephone: (416) 442-2292
FAX: (416) 442-2293
e-mail: abccanada@southam.ca
website: http://www.abc-canada.org
Price: $10.00

"The Development of Occupational Essential Skills Profiles" in Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape

Mair, Debra
19 pages
1997

The purpose of the Essential Skills Research Project (an initiative of Human Resources Development Canada) is "to develop occupational profiles that describe the basic skills required in each lower-skill entry-level occupation in Canada . . . . It is a response to employers' concerns regarding deficits in essential skills within their current workforce, or among job applicants, and is part of a broader program to assist industry in articulating its training needs." This chapter reports on the methodology phase of the study, including the major outcomes, which were: "development of a multi-faceted approach to describing the skill content of jobs using scales, typologies and example tasks; development of scales and typologies for each basic skills dimension; and development of an open-format interview approach for data collection." The profiles include four levels of skills: (1) traditional essential skills; (2) thinking skills; (3) new essential skills and (4) computer use.
Information on occupational skill requirements will, according to the author: "communicate industry's skill needs to training providers, facilitate upgrading training, and support the ongoing development of higher training . . . (as well as) career counseling, individual retraining decisions, and consequently supports the development of an adaptable workforce." The data collection phase of this project is complete and a series of occupational essential skills profiles have been developed, including a "Reader's Guide to Occupational Essential Skills." Further information on the project, including essential skills profiles and guides, can be obtained on the Internet at http://www.globalx.net/hrd

Category: Research
Available from:
Culture Concepts
6 Ashmount Crescent
Toronto, Ontario M9R 1C9
Telephone (416) 245-8119
FAX: (416) 245-3383
e-mail: cultureconcepts@sympatico.ca
website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

Linkage: A Manitoba Survey of Basic Skills Awareness in the Workplace

Workplace Education Manitoba
33 pages
1995

In 1994, Workplace Education Manitoba created the Linkage Project, to raise awareness of basic skills issues in the Manitoba workplace and determine the most appropriate future directions for basic skills training." The study targeted the six emerging economic sectors – Aerospace, Health Care Products, Environmental Industries, Tourism, Agri-Food Products, and Information and Telecommunication Industries. The project coordinators interviewed 78 companies, 121 employees, representatives from 10 government departments, five unions and 12 employer associations. The respondents were asked about their ability to assess needs and deliver basic skills education, as well as which models would work best.
Among the study's principal findings were the following:

- 92 per cent of all companies in Manitoba are small businesses . . . . Funding policies are not flexible enough to accommodate lost revenue from production during employee

training, making this issue a significant inhibitor to implementation of training.

- Many employers . . . are largely unaware of the negative effects of a lack of basic skills.
- Screening for basic skills proficiency levels has been increasing steadily over the last five years. Many employers indicate an intent to increase screening in the near future, but currently lack an adequate system or tool for doing so.

The report examines in detail the issues common to all sectors, sector-specific issues, issues for small companies, for employees and for unions, and makes recommendations.

Category: Research
ISBN:
Available from:
Manitoba Basic Education in the Workplace
410 - 185 Carlton Street
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3C 3J1
Telephone: (204) 945-1682
FAX: (204) 945-1792

FURTHER READING:

Current Rates in the Workplace Education Consulting Field
Fownes, Lynda
(Alpha Ontario)

CRITICAL VIEWS:

In addition to critical views voiced by the labour movement, there is also a trend present in American literature that has found some resonance in Canada. This trend challenges many of our assumptions about literacy and "complicates the picture."

The Politics of Workplace Literacy: A Case Study
Gowen, Sheryl
49 pages
1992

This study investigated the implementation and outcome of a workplace literacy training program for entry-level employees in a large urban hospital. The results of this study indicate that the functional context approach to workplace literacy training adopted for this program was problematic and ineffectual. The data suggested this was caused by four patterns: (a) definitions of literacy a competence were significantly different between the employees and those providing literacy training; (b) employees resisted the employer's definition of literacy and competence as well as the literacy program these beliefs generated; (c) employees perceived job-related text as inaccurate, redundant or controlling; and (d) employees had a broader range of goals for literacy than did the employer, the funding agency or the literacy providers.

Category: Critical Views
Available from:
Can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.
See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.

"How the Reorganization of Work Destroys Everyday Knowledge"* in *Alpha 96
Gowen, Sheryl
20 pages
1996

The author addresses the issue of how "high performance" and "total quality" styles of workplace organization have actually, "Served to further marginalize and alienate two different communities of workers." The author traces the history of one workplace organization,

emphasizing how various forms have undermined what she calls "informal communities of practice" that workers rely on to survive. She examines a small example of an effective organization – The House of God Rib Shack and Used Car Lot – where otherwise marginalized workers organize many activities which "exhibit many of the principles of a *total quality* workplace." In a second example, the author looks at Emerald Manufacturing, a company that is "moving toward total quality." The author observed that literacy and language use fell into two spheres: 1) those skills needed to perform daily work assignments, and 2) those skills needed to understand and interact with the infrastructure that surrounds and supports the work. The first and dominant sphere is characterized by an "indigenous collaboration," relying on oral communication, co-workers and common sense as resources. The second sphere relies more on print and "intellective skills" of abstraction, inference and procedural reasoning. While the workers performed their tasks quite competently, a needs assessment revealed low literacy levels that did not reflect the actual competencies of those assessed. The author concludes that: "at both work sites, workers developed effective communities of practice that management could not recognize, did not value, and, in the case of Emerald Manufacturing, would undercut with the introduction of technology that takes knowledge away and puts it into machines." This approach makes workers' knowledge invisible. The author says, in conclusion, "I am suggesting that literacy practitioners look critically at the public discourse of worker illiteracy and education failure then respectfully consider the highly effective organizations that many marginalized people have already developed, out of economic necessity, in order to survive in hostile economic conditions."

Category: Critical Views
ISBN:
Available from:
Culture Concepts
6 Ashmount Crescent
Toronto, Ontario M9R 1C9
Telephone (416) 245-8119
FAX: (416) 245-3383
e-mail: cultureconcepts@sympatico.ca
website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

The Labyrinths of Literacy: Reflections on Literacy Past and Present

Graff, Harvey
264 pages
1987

Graff presents readers with a carefully researched history of literacy from the Greeks to the modern age. In this detailed account, he stops occasionally to shatter popular myths about literacy, the process of becoming literate and the socio-historical context for literacy. In this, as well as his other published works, he carefully examines available evidence, taking the reader through arrest records, guild membership lists, private letters, census data and a variety of other documents. As he says, "Literacy is profoundly misunderstood." He builds a convincing case for viewing oracy and literacy as intertwined strands, and argues against those who would ascribe transforming revolutionary powers to literacy alone. As he points out frequently, the history of literacy is replete with continuities and contradictions. *(Thanks to Julian Evetts for this annotation.)*

Category: Critical Views
Available from:
Alpha Ontario

Changing Work, Changing Workers: Critical Perspectives on Language, Literacy and Skills

Hull, Glynda, editor
392 pages
1997

21

In the preface to this anthology, the editor indicates that, "There is a great need . . . to understand how people experience instructional programs and how they accomplish work; to document with care the kinds of things people are expected to know and be able to do in different work contexts; to critically examine the role that literacy and other valued practices can and cannot play in promoting economic productivity or in facilitating personal empowerment; and to discover the incentives and disincentives that people perceive and experience for acquiring and exercising literacy skills." This anthology aims to question some the basic assumptions shared by many in the workplace education field. Part I – "Perspectives from the Classroom" includes a critique of the "New Orthodoxy," as well as three field-based studies of actual workplace programs and three articles addressing the transition from school to work. Part II – "Perspectives from the Factory Floor," presents research about work processes and new technologies, about the relationship between literacy and language use and different forms of work organization, and about how people experience work and deal with unemployment. Other themes in the anthology include the experiences of women, ethnographic and participatory research methods as well as linguistic analyses. This is the most comprehensive collection to date of critical views in the field.

Category: Critical Views
ISBN: 0-7914-3219-X
Available from:
State University of New York Press
c/o CUP Services
P. O. 6525
Ithaca, New York 14851
Telephone: (607) 277-2211
FAX: (607) 277-6292
e-mail: orderbook@cupserv.org
website: http://www.sunypress.edu
Price: $21.95 U.S.

Quality and Learning: Who's Minding the Agenda?

Jackson, Nancy
9 pages
1995

The author is interested in "how language serves as a social force in the organization of public policy – in education as in other fields." She examines concepts of "competence" and "quality" in the private and public sectors. In her section on ISO, she states that, "It turns out that the concept of 'quality' can't be taken at face value . . . . Instead, they are concerned with instituting various kinds of documentary control systems that will let agencies outside of the workplace . . . decide whether a given supplier or provider of service is a reliable place to do business. Thus, these mechanisms are part of a pervasive agenda of privatization, marketisation and internationalism of local and regional economies." She argues that concepts like 'competence' and 'quality' "serve as social organizers. [They] provide a framework for each of us to arrange our daily working lives according to the dictates of the global marketplace." The article concludes with a section called "Reclaiming Quality for Learners." The author suggests that workplace educators ask themselves questions such as, "Whose language are we teaching? Will we encourage forms of language use that emulate and reproduce the dominant workplace culture? Will our teaching practices encourage a challenge towards the development of an alternate voice? Is part of workplace literacy the need to understand the nexus between power and language? Whose interests are we serving, and who is our client?"

Available from:
This is a conference paper from the 18th National Conference of the Australian Council for Adult Literacy, 1995.
It can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.
See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.

The Training Trap: Ideology, Training and the Labour Market

Society for Socialist Studies
320 pages
1996

In the introduction to this anthology, the editors state that, "Training has emerged of politicians and policy analysts alike. Once a relative backwater in the study of what used to be called 'manpower' policy, it is now widely held to be the key to achieving economic competitiveness and to reconstructing the welfare state. But those exaggerated claims made on behalf of training, we believe, are highly suspect." This collection of eleven chapters poses some profound challenges to the current view of training. Jamie Swift and David Peerla argue in Chapter 1 that, "We should view the conventional wisdom of the training gospel . . . as an ideological smokescreen for attitude adjustment." In Chapter 2, John Shields contrasts, "The image of the training discourse with the reality of the changing labour market." David Livingstone, in Chapter 3, challenges the existence of a "training deficit," arguing that Ontario's workforce might be overtrained in relation to the jobs available. In Chapter 4, Thomas Dunk examines issues of racial/ethnic and gender identity in relation to work. Chapter 5, by Ross Klein, examines training programs for social assistance recipients and concludes that these programs, "Increasingly function as a means for social control." Neil Bradford and M. Stevens in Chapter 6 examine the history of the Ontario Training and Adjustment Board. In Chapter 7, Lori Stinson O'Gorman examines the Workers' Education for Skills Training program of the Saskatchewan Federation of Labour, focusing on its, "Success in facilitating the development of working class consciousness." In their examination of the literacy campaign in Newfoundland in Chapter 8, authors Susan Hoddinott and Jim Overton point to the simultaneous dismantling of public adult education programs and the creation of "grassroots" movements that, "Make publicly acceptable [the government's] privatization agendas." In Chapter 9, Jennifer Stephen discusses the role for labour in the debate about training and adjustment, especially to ensure that workers' needs, and specifically the needs of women, workers of colour, immigrant workers and people with disabilities, are met. In Chapter 10, Karen Hadlet explores the relationship between worker training and workplace restructuring, including "continuous improvement," which is, "Designed to appropriate workers' intimate knowledge of their job processes in order to achieve the cost-cutting goals of lean production." In the final chapter, Gregory Albo returns to the big picture, arguing that an alternative employment policy is needed. His conclusion is that, "The solution is clearly, not more training. It is more democracy."

Category: Critical Views
Labour
ISBN: 1-895686-67-9
Available from:
Society for Socialist Studies
University College
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba R3T 2M8
Telephone: (204) 474-9119
FAX: (204) 261-0021
e-mail: vorst@ccm.umanitoba.ca

SEE ALSO: **SURVEYS & CRITIQUES**
LABOUR

FURTHER READING

"Complicating the Concept of Skill Requirements: Scenes from a Workplace" in Changing Work, Changing Workers

Darrah, Charles N.
Glynda Hull, editor
1997
State University of New York Press

Social Network: A New Perspective on Independence and Illiterate Adults
Fingeret, Arlene
Adult Education Quarterly 1983 33 (3)
(Alpha Ontario)

"Eyes on a Different Prize": A Critical Ethnography of a Workplace Literacy Program
Gowen, Sheryl
(Alpha Ontario)

"Is Literacy "A Good Deal"? A Critique of the Literacy Debate in Canada" in Alpha '96
Hautecoeur, Jean-Paul
(Alpha Ontario)

Education in the Workplace
Hoddinott, Susan
(Alpha Ontario)

Changing Work, Changing Literacy? A Study of Skill Requirements and Development in a Traditional and Restructured Workplace
Hull, Glynda; Jury, Mark; Ziv, Oren & Katz, Mira
1996
(Alpha Ontario)

"The Case Against Competence: The Impoverishment of Working Knowledge" in Our Schools/Our Selves, April 1989
Jackson, Nancy
(Alpha Ontario)

"Competence, Curriculum and Control"
Jackson, Nancy
1988
The Journal of Educational Thought. Vol. 22, No. 2A October 1988
(Alpha Ontario)

Reframing the Discourse of Skill
Jackson, Nancy
1997
Vocational Education Today: Topical Issues
(Alpha Ontario)

"Wolves in Charge of the Chicken Coop": Competence as Good Management in Education as Work, Education for Work: Canada's Changing Community Colleges
Jackson, Nancy
Muller, Jacob, editor
1990
(Alpha Ontario)

"Working Knowledge: The Politics of Skills Training" in Our Times, May 1989
Jackson, Nancy
(Alpha Ontario)

Workplace/Workforce Literacy: Trends & Issues in 1993
Johnston, Wendy
1993
(Alpha Ontario)

Adult Literacy Education: An Ethical Endeavour
Kazemek, Frances E.
1985
Adult Literacy and Basic Education 8 (2)
(Alpha Ontario)

Functional Literacy: Fond Illusions and False Economies

Levine, Kenneth
1982
Harvard Educational Review 52 (3)
(Alpha Ontario)

Living Literacy: Rethinking Development in Adulthood

Lytle, Susan L.
1991
Linguistics and Education 3
(Alpha Ontario)

Myth of the Coming Labour Shortage

Mishel, Lawrence & Teixeira, Ruy A.
Economic Policy Institute, Washington, DC

Issues in Workplace/Workforce Literacy in 1992

Shohet, Linda
1992
(Alpha Ontario)

"Literacy: "Autonomous" v. "Ideological" Model"

Street, Brian
1990
Adult Literacy and Basic Skills Unit, *Viewpoints Issue 4*
(Alpha Ontario)

PARTNERS

BUSINESS:

One of the critical partners in many workplace education programs is business. One of the concerns of the field has been how to convince businesses that workplace essential skills are important to them. The following annotations, from Canada and the U.S., illustrate some of the issues from a business point of view.

Training in America: The Organizational and Strategic Role of Training

Carnevale, Anthony P.;Gainer, Leila J. & Villet, Janice
284 pages
1990

This book is another in the ASTC "Best Practices" series, which also includes "Workplace Basics: The Essential Skills Employers Want." The authors examine the provision of workplace training from the professional HRD perspective. They catalogue who is trained, who does the training and, most importantly, why training takes place. This latter discussion is exclusively from a management point of view; little is said about the worker/trainees and their motivations. The book gives some useful insights into how management makes training decisions and how training professionals can affect that process. *(Thanks to Julian Evetts for this annotation.)*

26

Category: Business
ISBN: 1-55542-203-9

Available from:
Jossey-Bass Inc.
350 Sansome Street
San Francisco, California 94104-1342
Telephone: (415) 433-1767
website:http://www. josseybass.com
Price: $34.45 U.S.

Basic Skills – Basic Business

The Conference Board of Canada
63 pages
1992

PARTNERS

The objective of this study for the National Literacy Secretariat was to "provide some insight as to why the Canadian business community has not more aggressively addressed the issue (of literacy)." The study reviews eight businesses in terms of "how basic skills deficits are identified in the first instance, the impact of these deficiencies on organizational competitiveness and why corporate programs are developed in response to the issue." The study concludes that, "In most cases, management tended to see the lack of basic skills as posing a potential rather than an imminent threat to the organization." The study also found that quality initiatives and technological change were both linked to the identification of basic skills needs. Many of the study participants "view their involvement with providing basic skills training as an opportunity to develop a more positive and cooperative relationship with both employees and unions." Downsizing also tends to reveal basic skills needs, as younger workers with more recent experiences with the school system are laid off. Another Conference Board study reported that 40 per cent of the surveyed employers carry out pre-employment testing to screen applications for basic skills. "Those companies report screening out an average of 15 per cent of job applications because of inadequate literacy and numeracy levels . . . ." The 1992 study concludes that, "Basic skills deficiencies in the workplace tend to be addressed as an issue only when corporate interests are directly affected."

Category: Business
Available from:
National Literacy Secretariat
Human Resources Development Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1K5
Telephone: (819) 953-5280
FAX: (819) 953-8076
e-mail: nls@fox.nstn.ca
website: http://www.nald.ca/nls.htm
Price: free
French version also available.

The Economic Benefits of Improving Literacy Skills in the Workplace

Conference Board of Canada
18 pages
1997

In the past, according to this report, "business and government focused on boosting economic growth by increasing consumer spending, creating a climate that encourages business investment and improving Canada's export position." But, the report continues, "Today the emphasis is changing . . . . Despite record investment in machinery and equipment . . . Canada's position in relation to our major competitors has fallen over the last decade . . . . Evidence is beginning to emerge that places part of the responsibility on the shoulders of inadequate employee skills and training." The report goes on to extensively examine the economic benefits for both employers and employees. When the benefits for employers were tabulated, the top three benefits were, "Increased ability to handle training on the job; better team performance and improved labour-management relations." Benefits for employees are not based on questionnaires (as were the responses from employers) but rather rely on data from the International Adult Literacy Survey, indicating a relationship between literacy and income levels, decreased incidence of unemployment, more full-time employment and more training.

Category: Business

Available from:
The Conference Board of Canada
255 Smyth Road
Ottawa, Ontario K1H 8M7
Telephone: (613) 526-3280
FAX: (613) 526-4857
Website: http://www.conferenceboard.ca
Price: $30.00

"Company Training and Education: Who Does It, Who Gets It and Does It Pay Off?"
in *Workforce Economics*
National Alliance of Business
12 pages
1997

This article addresses four questions:

- Which industries and kinds of companies provide training?
- What kinds of employees are more likely to be trained?
- To what extent is training being delivered in new ways?
- What are some promising practices for evaluating the effectiveness of training?

Company training and education are increasing in the U.S., according to the article. Forty-one per cent of American workers reported receiving skill-improvement training from their company in 1991, up 36 per cent from 1983. Although on the surface it looks like larger companies are more likely to deliver training, another study found that, "The complexity of the environment faced by an organization, the degree of market competition and the company's internal organization are the most important determinants of training." Although other studies have found that more educated workers get more training, this article untangles this relationship to reveal that the complexity of a worker's job may be a more important factor in training. According to the article, more companies in the U.S. are turning to alternative delivery methods, using more external training providers. Most training is still delivered in instructor-led courses, with only 17 per cent being delivered through technology, although this is beginning to increase. In terms of evaluation, the article refers to Kirkpatrick's four levels of training evaluation (proceeding from changes in a participant's reactions to changes in organizational results). Apparently more U.S. companies are, "Challenging their training departments to more accurately measure the value-added of training." The article concludes with a reference to some promising practices, including the formation of "Learning Consortiums."

Category: Business
ISBN:
Available from:
Can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.
See "Other Bibliographies & Collections for information about borrowing this item.

SEE ALSO: **PARTNERSHIPS**

PARTNERS

FURTHER READING:

Newsletters
Business Council for Effective Literacy
(Alpha Ontario)

"Understanding Basic Workplace Skills in a Changing Business Environment"
in *Basic Skills for the Workplace*
Jones, Paul
Taylor, Maurice C.; Lewe, Glenda R. & Draper, James A, editors
1991
(Alpha Ontario)

"Understanding Literacy in the Canadian Business Context: Conference Board of Canada Study"
in Basic Skills for the Workplace

Hart, Kenneth
Taylor, Maurice C.; Lewe, Glenda R. & Draper, James A, editors
1991
(Alpha Ontario)

"Literacy and Business: An Economic Challenge for the '90s"

National Literacy Secretariat
Canadian Business Review, Vol. 18, No. 1
Spring 1991
(Alpha Ontario)

PARTNERS

LABOUR:

The labour movement in Canada has been involved in education and training since its inception. Faced with a new political and economic context, the labour movement is continuing to develop its own agenda on issues such as essential skills and training in general.

"Redesigning Training in Auto Parts: From First Principles to Integrated Curriculum and Interactive Classrooms"
in Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape

Brophy, Lynn & Robertson, David
19 pages
1997

This chapter describes the experience of the Automotive Parts Sectoral Training Council in developing an innovative curriculum for the industry. The authors, both unionists, describe the political and economic context of the autoparts initiative. They go on to describe the dynamics of a Council where the union and the employers had a "working relationship," not a joint one. The Council, as the authors point out, recognized that, "Education and training are never neutral. The Council not only recognized the point but structured a curriculum around it." This process produced an 80-hour upgrading program in two levels leading to an Auto Parts Certificate. This chapter provides descriptions of innovative features of the program, what the authors call "The Training Trilogy: Integrated, Analytic and Developmental." There is also an interesting discussion on the contrast between the Council's approach to evaluation and the government's approach. The Council's training may unfortunately, "End up as a curriculum in search of a program," according to the authors, due to a lack of employer commitment to training. However, the entire program is a good example of what is possible.

Category: Labour
Partnerships
Good Practice
ISBN: 0-921472-28-5
Available from:
Culture Concepts
6 Ashmount Crescent
Toronto, Ontario M9R 1C9
Telephone (416) 245-8119
FAX: (416) 245-3383
e-mail: cultureconcepts@sympatico.ca
website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

"Training for Employability and Citizenship: Making an Essential Linkage"
in Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape

Dassinger, Janet
18 pages
1997

This chapter argues that unions have a central role to play in both workplace training and labour adjustment. The author raises a number of general questions about the kind of training the labour movement should be advocating. She also illustrates the issues through a description of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union's involvement in a joint sectoral initiative in the grocery products sector, as well as in a union-initiated Lay-off and Closure Program. This chapter discusses how trade unions have an opportunity to link training to the social and political world their members inhabit and to build skills for more democratic participation in every sphere of their lives.

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e-mail: cultureconcepts@sympatico.ca
website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

"Strengthening Labour Roles in Basic Skills Programming" in *Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape*

Dowdell, Graham
14 pages
1997

In this chapter, the author describes the involvement of the Manitoba Federation of Labour (MFL) in basic skills education. He describes the history of the MFL's involvement in education and training, situating the Federation's interest in basic skills. The Labour Basic Skills Project was initiated in 1994 to raise awareness and determine roles for various labour bodies. Based on the results of an extensive survey, the MFL developed recommendations touching on awareness-raising, consultation and support to union locals, networking and training, as well as developing a union-based delivery model, collecting union-based communication skills curriculum and increasing local ownership. The name of the project was changed to the Labour Communication Skills Project. At the end of the chapter, the author raises a number of questions for on-going discussion in the labour movement.

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ISBN: 0-921472-28-5
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e-mail: cultureconcepts@ sympatico.ca
website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

A Union Approach to Workplace Education

Labour Education and Research Centre
University of Oregon
64 pages
1995

Written from a union and worker perspective, this manual is a resource for workers and unions who want to create workplace education programs. It walks the reader through the steps of setting up a program, from "Getting Started" and "Putting the Plan in Action" to "Evaluating a Workplace Education Program." The manual uses examples from real workplaces to illustrate the process. It includes useful forms and charts, such as: "Documenting Changes in Technology and Work Organization," "Sample Survey Questions," "Sample Education Benefit Contract Language," "Sample Individual Education Plan," "Sample Participant

Evaluation Report," as well as an extensive U.S.-based list of resources.

Available from:
Labour Education and Research Center
1289 University of Oregon
Eugene, Oregon 97403-1289
Telephone: (541) 346-5054
FAX: (541) 346-2790
e-mail: bhedges@oregon.uoregon.edu
http:// www.uoregon.edu/~lerc/index.html

PARTNERS

"Workplace learning programs in the changing 1990s" in *Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape*

Mackenzie, Stephanie
9 pages
1997

This chapter examines how workplace learning programs are changing in structure and focus in response to rapid changes in work and technology as experienced by the Metro Labour Education Centre (MLEC), a non-profit corporation established in 1987 by the Labour Council of Metropolitan Toronto and York Region in Ontario. The author examines the economic restructuring that took place in southern Ontario over the last decade and how workplace learning programs offered by MLEC have adjusted to changing needs. "In sum," says the author, "As the work environment changes, we need to also embrace change in program delivery at the workplace. The people who do the jobs know best what tools they need to improve at work and in their personal lives."

Category: Labour
Program Development
ISBN: 0-921472-28-5
Available from:
Culture Concepts
6 Ashmount Crescent
Toronto, Ontario M9R 1C9
Telephone (416) 245-8119
FAX: (416) 245-3383
e-mail: cultureconcepts@sympatico.ca
website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

Worker-Centered Learning: A Union Guide to Workplace Literacy

Sarmiento, Anthony R. & Kay, Ann
136 pages
1990

This was one of the first guides for setting up workplace literacy programs that are worker-centred and union-organized. There is a discussion of the need for union involvement in workplace education, plus a step-by-step framework to define the union role in assessing worker needs and setting up a program. Included are checklists, forms and other useful resource materials.

Available from:
Can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.
See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.

"Do Workplace Literacy Programs Promote High Skills or Low Wages?" in *Labour Notes, July 1991*

Sarmiento, Anthony
1991
5 pages

This article maintains that workplace literacy programs can, "Support the path toward either low wages or high skills." The author asserts that ,"In Tayloristic companies following the 'low wage' path, workplace literacy programs are likely to adopt a narrow, job-specific basic skills curriculum," while, "Companies pursuing a 'high skill' business strategy give more responsibility on the job . . . and programs tend to be broader and less job-specific." The author suggests that program evaluations should not only examine learner outcomes, but also program impacts on employer practices, in

order to, "Ensure that our publicly-funded workplace literacy efforts help employers to pursue 'high skill' rather than 'low wage' path."

Category: Labour
Critical Views
Available from:
Can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.
See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.

"So We Can Make Our Voices Heard: The Ontario Federation of Labour's BEST Project on Worker Literacy"
in *Basic Skills for the Workplace*
Turk, James & Unda, Jean
13 pages
1991

This is one of the best descriptions of a labour perspective on worker literacy. It clearly explains that the labour movement does not see literacy as an end in itself, but rather as a means to empower workers. The article explains that limited literacy is not the cause of various social and economic problems like unemployment, workplace accidents, low productivity, poverty or the country's lack of competitiveness. "Limited literacy skills," say the authors, "Compound many problems but cause few." Instead, the labour movement sees that improved literacy skills "would . . . allow people to be better able to tackle these broader problems." The design of the BEST program is a concrete example of this approach. The article describes the features of BEST, which is designed to "facilitate the growth of the collective ability of working people to shape the world in which we live."

Category: Labour
Program Development
Good Practice
ISBN: 0-921472-06-4
OUT OF PRINT
Can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.

See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.

SEE ALSO: **CRITICAL VIEWS**

FURTHER READING

A Place of Hope: A Positive Response to the Fisheries Crisis
ABC CANADA's Workplace Education Centre
(Alpha Ontario)

Training for What? Labour Perspectives on Job Training
Beckerman, André et al
Our Schools/Our Selves 1992 Nov. 11 (11)

WorkBase Trades Union Education and Skills Project
Workbase/ALBSU
Bonnerjea, Lea
1987
(Alpha Ontario)

High Performance Work and Learning Systems
Human Resources Development Institute
1991
(Alpha Ontario)

One Step at a Time: Developing a Literacy Network in the Quebec Federation of Labour
Johnston, Wendy
1992
(Alpha Ontario)

Labour-Initiated Literacy Programs in Canada
Johnston, Wendy
1994
(Alpha Ontario)

1986 Convention Resolution on Life-Long Learning
Ontario Federation of Labour
(Alpha Ontario)

Working Class Learning Strategies in Transition: Home and Union-Based Perspective Project Bibliography
Sawchuk, Peter
1997
(Alpha Ontario)

Literacy: Defining the Problem, Posing the Solution
Turk, James
1990
Ontario Federation of Labour
(Alpha Ontario)

"Instructor Empowerment in the Ontario Federation of Labour's BEST Project"* in *Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape
Unda, Jean & Clifford, Sandra
1997

PARTNERSHIPS:

Partnerships have been a central theme in the development of workplace education in Canada. Over the last decade, the field has developed an increasingly sophisticated understanding of who the partners should be and what process is needed to deepen those relationships.

"Building Linkages in Large Organizations: The Syncrude Canada Ltd. Experience"* in *Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape
Campbell, Lloyd & Dieleman, Carolyn
14 pages
1997

This chapter outlines the efforts of Syncrude Canada Ltd. to address the skills needs of its workforce. Starting from the assumption that, "A training organization must become a learning organization," Syncrude spends five to seven per cent of its salary budget on employee development. The authors trace the history of the ERIC (Effective Reading in Context) program, how it is delivered, as well as key learnings and outcomes. The chapter then outlines some of the partnership relationships that Syncrude has developed with other businesses, labour, government, provincial and national initiatives, the educational system, as well as a regional workplace education network. A good example of a large, forward-thinking corporation's success in the workplace education field.

Category: Partnerships
ISBN: 0-921472-28-5
Available from:
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6 Ashmount Crescent
Toronto, Ontario M9R 1C9
Telephone (416) 245-8119
FAX: (416) 245-3383
e-mail: cultureconcepts@sympatico.ca
website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

"Partnership Building in Nova Scotia" in *Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape*

Davison, Marjorie & Temple, Paul
16 pages
1997

This chapter examines the experience of partnership-building in Nova Scotia (NS). It identifies primary and secondary partners, based on their direct or indirect involvement in workplace initiatives. "While secondary partners consider business and labour from a broader perspective, primary partners have a direct impact on individual relationships." The authors view primary partnerships as a combination of business, labour and adult education expertise. This chapter examines the NS model, which is driven by a project team who oversee the whole process, including doing an organizational needs assessment, while developing an atmosphere of "respect, trust and confidentiality." The project team acts to, "Bridge the broader intent of education with the specific focus of training." The team's broader goal is to develop a "learning culture" within the workplace. The NS model of evaluation also reflects the link between education and training. Quantitative methods lend themselves to programs that are more oriented to training, while qualitative methods are more often used in programs with a broader educational focus. The second part of the chapter deals with the role of government as both a primary and secondary partner. The chapter examines the "initiating function" of government, its coordinating function as a primary partner and its supporting functions as a secondary partner. This is a good example of a government-initiated infrastructure.

Category: Partnerships
ISBN: 0-921472-28-5
Available from:
Culture Concepts
6 Ashmount Crescent
Toronto, Ontario M9R 1C9
Telephone (416) 245-8119
FAX: (416) 245-3383
e-mail: cultureconcepts@sympatico.ca
website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

"What Makes a Successful Workplace Education Partnership?" in *Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape*

Despins, Rob; Maruca, Greg; Turner, Sue
14 pages
1997

This chapter chronicles the development of the Workplace Education Steering Committee, a business, labour and government workplace education partnership. As the authors note, " . . . The shift from a resource-based to information-based economy coupled with the rapid introduction and expanding use of new technologies in the workplace is dramatically altering the composition of skills in demand." The tripartite committee that was set up developed some information principles of good practice during its development stages, including: joint management and labour participation; voluntary employee participation; avoidance of a deficiency-based model and of measuring literacy rates; and a de-emphasis of formal testing. The chapter describes how a number of sector-specific literacy models work, using project teams as the focus of the projects and developing needs assessments and evaluations. Instructor professional development has also been a priority of this initiative. This is a good example

of a government-initiated infrastructure.

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website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

PARTNERS

"A Framework for Developing Partnerships" in *Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape*

Doughty, Wendy
17 pages
1997

This chapter takes a detailed look at the process of developing collaborative partnerships in the workplace education field. In her introduction the author says, "Collaboration is distinct from cooperation in its requirement to alter the status quo of partner organizations by changing structures, policies and practices . . . . Yet current research provides virtually no descriptive evidence of these structural changes within partner organizations." This chapter tries to address these issues. "Collaboration," says the author, "Is by its very nature long term and requires intensive planning of administrative, personnel and financial matters . . . . This statement presents a bitter irony when, in fact, most workplace education programs are provided funds on a term specific basis." The author examines the role of different partners, the importance of realistic expectations as well as supportive infrastructures. She also addresses some of the challenges that collaborative partnerships face. The author advocates the value of process in collaborative initiatives. This chapter contains very useful information for both program developers and program partners.

Category: Partnerships
Good Practice
Program Development
ISBN: 0-921472-28-5
Available from:
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website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

"Training for Employability and Citizenship: Making an Essential Linkage" in *Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape*

Dassinger, Janet
18 pages
1997

The author argues that unions have a central role to play in both workplace training and labour adjustment. She raises a number of general questions about the kind of training the labour movement should be advocating and illustrates the issues through a description of the United Food and Commercial Workers Union's involvement in a joint sectoral initiative in the grocery products sector, as well as in a union-initiated Lay-off and Closure Program. The author discusses how trade unions have an opportunity to link training to the social and political world their members inhabit and to build skills for more democratic participation in every sphere of their lives.

Category: Partnerships
Labour
ISBN: 0-921472-28-5
Available from:
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website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

"The Massachusetts Workplace Education Program" in Basic Skills for the Workplace

Hikes, Judy
17 pages
1991

In 1986 Massachusetts began a state-sponsored workplace education program. Four state agencies collaboratively fund and manage the program. The worksite projects are set up and run by partnerships of educational agencies, companies, unions and workers. This chapter examines the different aspects of the program and its impact on the people involved.

Category: Partnerships
ISBN: 0-921472-06-4
OUT OF PRINT
Can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.
See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.

SEE ALSO: **Business**
Labour
Program Development

FURTHER READING

Wisconsin Workplace Partnership Training Program

Centre on Education and Work
1996
(Alpha Ontario)

Partners in Literacy: An Overview of Projects 1990

National Literacy Secretariat
(National Literacy Secretariat)

REACH Report: The Story of Project REACH

A project of the New York State Governor's Office of Employee Relations and The Civil Service Employees Association, Inc.
1994
(Alpha Ontario)

PRACTICE

Good Practice:

In the workplace education field in Canada, practice meets theory in discussions about "good practice." Based on concrete experiences, people in the field have developed a set of guidelines for successful programs that they call "principles of good practice." While these guidelines may vary from province to province and from sector to sector, there are some underlying commonalties.

Principles of Good Practice in Workplace/Workforce Education: A Report on the Think-tank

MacLeod, Carol
36 pages
1995

This think-tank on the principles of good practice in workplace/workforce education was sponsored by ABC CANADA and the National Literacy Secretariat in November 1995. The report contains the results of the think tank, organized as follows:

- how we went about discussing the issues
- a list of good practice statements that might form the basis of your own good practice documents, and
- some ideas about how you might go about conducting a similar process in your organization.

37

The first part of the document is a very useful guide to the process of organizing such a think-tank, including a detailed description of how feedback was gathered from three different sources. Feedback on different topics is organized by the degree to which participants agreed with a given statement. This allows both majority and divergent opinions to be expressed. The topics covered include: partnership and participation; assessment; equity/diversity; principles of adult education; program content and delivery; personnel management; program evaluation and program administration. A useful Appendix entitled "A Summary of Principles of Good Practice in Workplace Education Development" by Mary Ellen Belfiore is also included. This report gives a sense of the consensus that has developed in the Canadian workplace education field as well as the productive tensions that still exist.

Category: Good Practice
Available from:
National Literacy Secretariat
Human Resources Development Canada
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1K5
Telephone: (819) 953-5280
FAX: (819) 953-8076
e-mail: nls@fox.nstn.ca
website: http://www.nald.ca/nls.htm
Price: free
French version also available.

PRACTICE

"Towards a Framework of Good Practice" in Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape

Steel, Nancy; Johnston, Wendy; Belfiore, Mary Ellen & Folinsbee, Sue
Taylor, M., editor
13 pages
1997

This chapter, according to its abstract, "Focuses on principles that are commonly shared by stakeholders in the field. In particular, the emphasis is on principles and practice that are drawn from the authors' experiences (as consultants for ABC CANADA's Workplace Education Centre) and our guidelines for developing one's own principles." "Principles of good practice," they say, "Represent the accumulated memory of our experience in helping to set up programs in a wide variety of workplaces." Three essential principles are identified: an asset-based approach; a holistic approach; and, inclusion and collaboration. The authors not only interpret these principles, but also examine their application in practice. The article ends with some suggestion about how to develop your own set of principles of good practice.

Category: Good Practice
Program Development
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website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

OTHER READINGS:

From the Classroom to the Workplace: Training Workplace Practitioner

Alberta Vocational College
Edmonton, 1995

Training Standards

Ottawa, September 1995
Canadian Labour Force Development Board

Good Practice Statements and Principles of Good Practice for Workplace Education

Literacy B.C.
Vancouver 1992 (adapted) and 1994 (revised)

***"Working with Industry Sectors: Guiding Principles and Lessons Learned" in* Workplace Education Status Report**

Manitoba Workplace Steering Committee
Workplace Education Manitoba
Winnipeg

Labour-Management Innovation in Canada: Canadian Examples of Successful Efforts by Labour and Management to Jointly Address the Challenge of the New Workplace

Human Resources Development Canada
Labour-Management Partnership Program
HRDC 1994

Workplace Program Criteria

Metro Labour Education Centre
Toronto, 1995

Workplace Literacy Best Practice Definition

National Workforce Assistance Collaborative
Washington, DC

Principles of Good Practice in Workplace Literacy" and Community Learning Initiative Monitoring Guidelines

Nova Scotia Department of Education and Culture, Adult Education Section
Halifax, Nova Scotia

Principles and Standards for Workplace/Workforce Equity and Basic Skills (W/WEBS)

Ontario Training and Adjustment Board
Toronto, 1995

Program Development:

There are many "how-to" materials in the workplace education field. They approach program development from different points of view. Some come from a business perspective, others emphasize collaboration. They address essential process issues that determine the sustainability of programs.

The Benefits of Participating in Collaborative Committees

Belfiore, Mary Ellen
14 pages
1997

While much of the work in the workplace education field is focused on organizing workplace programs, the impact of the process itself is often ignored. The Workplace Education Centre works with workplace committees to plan and implement programs. This piece of research is a follow-up with committee participants at a number of different workplaces to solicit their input about the impacts of the collaborative planning process itself. This report examines the benefits to committee members as well as the benefits to organizations and communities. It takes a look at the resources needed to support committee work and some of the challenges committees face.

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ABC CANADA
1450 Don Mills Road
Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2X7
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FAX: (416) 442-2293
e-mail: abccanada@southam.ca
website: http://www.abc-canada.org
Price: $10.00

"How to Establish a Workplace Basic Skills Program: A Blueprint for Success" in Basic Skills for the Workplace

Carnevale, A.; Gainer, L. & Meltzer, A.
13 pages
1991

This chapter summarizes the applied approach for establishing a training program in workplace basic skills. The authors examine eight steps: identifying the need for basic skills training; building support for training; gaining management's and the union's approval of the plan; performing task analyses on selected jobs; designing the training program; developing the curriculum; implementing the training program; and evaluating and monitoring the program. The focus of this approach is performance-based training for specific jobs in the workplace.

Category: Program Development
ISBN: 0-921472-06-4
OUT OF PRINT
Can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.
See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.

PRACTICE

Collaborative Workplace Development

Folinsbee, Sue & Jurmo, Paul
24 pages
1994

This booklet presents principles of good practice and provides steps for planning and putting into place a collaborative workplace development initiative. It is also an introduction to a series of handbooks that deal with specific components of workplace development such as needs assessment, evaluation and curriculum development. The booklet emphasizes the importance of planning in the context of winning the support of everyone involved in a workplace education initiative.

Category: Program Development
Partnerships
ISBN: 0-9699159-0-X
Available from:
ABC CANADA
1450 Don Mills Road
Don Mills, Ontario M3B 2X7
Telephone: (416) 442-2292
FAX: (416) 442-2293
e-mail: abccanada@southam.ca
website: http://www.abc-canada.org
Price: $10.00

Literacy at Work: The Workbook for Program Developers

Phillipi, Jori
323 pages
1991

The author started her work in the field with Thomas Sticht on the U.S. Army's Basic Skills for Enlisted Personnel (BSEP) Program and she remains faithful to the "functional context" approach first suggested by him. The book is divided into compact chapters which contain application exercises, checklists and cogent examples. She deals with the issue of recognizing literacy problems, building organizational commitment, performing task analyses, operating programs and carrying out an evaluation. The book's most useful section deals with designing curriculum. Phillippi, following the practice developed for military applications, divides instruction into 40 hour "chunks." These modular pieces of curriculum focus on topics revealed during the needs assessment and can be delivered and evaluated before proceeding to the next step. (Annotation abridged from Julian Evetts.)

Category: Program Development
Curriculum Development
Available from:
Alpha Ontario

40

FURTHER READING:

"How to Establish a Workplace Basic Skills Program: A Blue Print for Success"
in *Basic Skills for the Workplace*
Carnevale, A.P.; Gainer, L. & Meltzer, A.
1990
(Alpha Ontario)

Literacy at Work: Delivering Literacy Training in the Workplace
English in the Working Environment
1991
(Alpha Ontario)

The MWP Process: A Developer's Guide
Lam, Cindy
1990
City of Toronto Board of Education

Workplace Education: Making It Work
Nova Scotia Department of Education & Culture
1996
(Alpha Ontario)

NEEDS ASSESSMENT:

The term "needs assessment" can be used to describe very different processes. An organizational needs assessment takes a look at a composite of essential skills needs of an organization, like a business or a union, while an individual needs assessment can determine the education and training needs of an individual. "Literacy task analyses" look at the essential skills necessary to perform a given job. "Job profiling" is a more recent development in the field. These different approaches to assessing needs reflect different philosophies of workplace education.

Collaborative Needs Assessment
Folinsbee, Sue & Jurmo, Paul
63 pages
1994

This is part of a series of booklets produced by ABC CANADA. In the framework of collaborative process, the authors walk the reader through the process of developing and implementing a Workplace Needs Assessment (WNA). The first section details the process necessary to lay the groundwork for the WNA, including its design. The second part details how to carry out a WNA by gathering information through interviews and focus groups, and organizing and analyzing the information. The third part of the booklet gets into how to interpret and report the information and part four addresses how to develop an action plan and evaluate the WNA.

Category: Needs Assessment
Program Development

PRACTICE

41

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website: http://www.abc-canada.org
Price: $20.00

"How to Assess Learners and Build Workplace Literacy Programs" in *Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape*

Ioannou, Miria; Nore, Gordon; Poulton, Brent & Thompson, Sarah
15 pages
1997

This chapter in the anthology describes Frontier College's method for determining learning needs and developing programs within organizations to meet those needs. Informing senior managers, carrying out organizational needs assessments and implementing volunteer tutoring programs are elements of the method described. Potential learners and tutors are recruited from within the organization and interviewed to determine areas of need and interest. Tutors are trained and matched with learners one-to-one or in small groups. Program evaluation is also discussed.

Category: Needs Assessment
Program Development
Evaluation
ISBN: 0-921472-06-4
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e-mail: cultureconcepts@sympatico.ca
website: www3.sympatico.ca/cultureconcepts
Price: $35.00

Literacy Task Analysis: A How-to Manual for Workplace Trainers

Taylor, Maurice & Lewe, Glenda
172 pages
1990

This manual is a useful compilation of techniques and instruments for anyone working to improve basic skills in the workplace. The authors reviewed a wide range of related literature, drawing relevant material from both literacy and job training sources. The book starts with a review of the current view of the changing workplace and the skills needed by workers to succeed in this context. It proceeds to the rationale and planning of a Literacy Task Analysis (LTA) and finally to practical methods for collecting and analyzing job information. While the focus of the LTA is on basic skills, the authors make it clear that the information gathered can be used for a variety of purposes – from assessing employees' transferability and promotability to designing training for new technology.
(Thanks to Julian Evetts for this annotation.)

Category: Needs Assessment
Available from:
Alpha Ontario

Asking New Questions: Assessment for Workplace Literacy

Young, C.D.
74 pages
1994

Project REACH (Reading, Education and Achievement) is a labour-management partnership whose goal is to serve over 94,000 New York State employees who are members of the Civil Service Employees Association, Inc. This booklet documents the evolution of their thinking about developing workplace education programs and especially assessment. The author describes how the project initially applied "school-based" approaches, then advanced to linking basic skills with real job

needs ,and finally developed an approach that deepened the "buy-in" necessary for a successful program. The booklet examines different definitions of literacy and examines their advantages and limitations. "Literacy," says the author, "Can be viewed as: 1) a set of skills; 2) the accomplishment of tasks; 3) social practice; and 4) political empowerment and critical reflection. For each definition, different units of analysis are used. The author connects the underlying definition of literacy to the tools used to assess needs. The project developed an interesting chart, using the above-mentioned definitions of literacy, to describe six different kinds of work. Based on a collaborative approach to program development, the REACH program learned many lessons useful for other programs.

Category: Needs Assessment
Program Development
ISBN:
Available from:
Governor's Office of Employee Relations
Corning Tower, 23rd Floor, Empire State Plaza
Albany, New York 12223
Telephone: (518) 473-3939
OR
The Civil Service Employees Association Inc.
Labour Education Action Program
One Lear Jet Lane, Suite 3
Latham, New York 12110
Telephone: (518) 785-4669

FURTHER READING:

"How to Identify Workplace Communications Skills in the British Columbia Sawmill Industry"
in *Basic Skills for the Workplace*
1990
(Alpha Ontario)

"Analyzing Workplace Literacy Skills: Lessons from the Front"
in *Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape*
McKeag, Janice
1997
(Alpha Ontario)

"Developing a Pre-employment Test for the Workplace"
in Workplace Education: The Changing Landscape
Millar, Robin
1997
(Alpha Ontario)

"How to Design Instruction: From Literacy Task Analyses to Curriculum"
in *Basic Skills for the Workplace*
Philippi, Jori
1990
(Alpha Ontario)

"How to Approach Worker Testing and Assessment"
in *Basic Skills for the Workplace*
Taylor, Maurice
1990
(Alpha Ontario)

"How to Plan and Conduct a Literacy Task Analysis"
in *Basic Skills for the Workplace*
Taylor, Maurice & Lewe, Glenda
1990
(Alpha Ontario)

Test Review: Workplace Assessment Tools
Taylor, Maurice
1997
(National Literacy Secretariat)

"How to Assess Organizational Needs and Requirements" in Basic Skills for the Workplace

Waugh, Sue (Folinsbee)
1990
(Alpha Ontario)

An Organizational Approach to Workplace Basic Skills: A Guidebook for Literacy Practitioners

Waugh, Sue (Folinsbee)
1992
(Alpha Ontario)

EVALUATION:

Evaluation has become an important issue in the workplace education field. Educators are being challenged by business to quantify the impacts of programs. Workplace program developers are seeking ways to develop collaborative evaluation procedures that can deepen the buy-in from all partners and contribute to on-going training and education in the workplace.

PRACTICE

"Evaluating Workplace Literacy Programs" in Basic Skills for the Workplace

Chang, Kathryn
15 pages
1991

This chapter addresses the need for evaluation in workplace education programs. "If workplace literacy programs are to survive, educators working in the employment environment must adapt to the management practices of business and industry in addition to evaluating for purely educational reasons." The chapter reviews the literature on evaluation and gives some examples of evaluations. She reviews some of the problems associated with evaluation: a lack of control groups; a dual set of objectives (employer-centred and student-centred); and various barriers to data collection such as insufficient time, resources, expertise and standardized measurement tools. The chapter then discusses the "Who, Why, When, How and What" of evaluation and reviews the steps, which she identifies as: description, comparison, and judgment.

Category: Evaluation
ISBN: 0-921472-06-4
OUT OF PRINT
Ca be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.
See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.

Collaborative Evaluation

Folinsbee, Sue & Jurmo, Paul
77 pages
1994

This booklet is part of a series produced by ABC CANADA. The authors approach evaluation from a collaborative framework. The booklet details various steps in a collaborative evaluation process, emphasizing the importance of the process itself, as well as the eventual product. The authors' process involves fifteen steps, taken by an evaluation committee, involving all the interest groups.

Category: Evaluation
Program
ISBN: 0-699159-2-6
Available from:
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1450 Don Mills Road
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FAX: (416) 442-2293
e-mail: abccanada@southam.ca
website: http://www.abc-canada.org
Price: $20.00

Workplace Education: Stakeholders' Expectations, Practitioners' Responses and the Role Evaluation Might Play

Jurmo, Paul
104 pages
1994

This study was written as part of a larger project funded in 1993-94 by the U.S. National Institute for Literacy. Its goal was to provide educators with ways to improve the evaluation of workplace basic skills programs. It argues for a "collaborative" or "team" approach to planning and evaluation. Chapter 1 examines the history of evaluation, with emphasis on different perspectives and goals for workplace basic skills programs. Chapter 2 examines what evaluation currently looks like. Chapter 3 discusses the strengths and needed improvement of current evaluation practice, identifying what a good evaluation should look like and what should be avoided. Chapter 4 describes promising developments and the emergent literature in support of collaborative learning. Chapter 5 takes a look at how to develop appropriate evaluation practices.

Category: Evaluation
ISBN:
Available from:
Literacy Partnerships
14 Griffin Street
East Brunswick, NJ
USA 08816-4806
Telephone: (732) 254-2237
FAX: (732) 254-2070

"Deciding on the Effectiveness of Workplace Literacy Programs" in Basic Skills for the Workplace

Mikulecky, Larry & D'Adamo-Weinstein, Lisa
18 pages
1991

In this chapter the authors review evaluation documents and program descriptions for a number of workplace basic skills programs. They found that most report no vigorous evaluation efforts, with the majority of the literature being descriptive in nature. The few examples of worthwhile evaluations are mostly by the military. These evaluations focus on reading gains within specific contexts and clearly show the need for targeting instruction on workplace tasks. As the result of their experience working on such program evaluations, the authors suggest that Shufflebeam's "context, input, process, product" model can be useful in helping to clarify goals and point out weaknesses that can cripple basic skills programs.

Category: Evaluation
OUT OF PRINT
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See "Other Bibliographies & Collections" for information about borrowing this item.

FURTHER READING:

A Program Evaluation Handbook for Workplace Literacy

Barker, Kathryn C.
1991
(Alpha Ontario)

Who Want What Information – And How Do We Get It? Issues in Workplace Education Evaluation

Jurmo, Paul
1991
(Alpha Ontario)

Adult Literacy Education: Program Evaluation and Learner Assessment

Lytle, S.L. & Wolfe, M.
1989
ERIC Clearinghouse on adult, Career and Vocational Education

How Do You Know if It's Working? Evaluating the Effectiveness of Workplace Literacy Programs
Phillipi, Jori W.
1992
Springfield, VA
Performance Plus Learning Consultants

Alternative Designs for Evaluating Workplace Literacy Programs
Sarmiento, Anthony R.
(Alpha Ontario)

Team Evaluation: A Guide for Workplace Education Programs
Sperazi, Laura & Jurmo, Paul
1994
(Alpha Ontario)

Team Evaluation: Case Studies from Seven Workplace Education Programs
Sperazi, Laura & Jurmo, Paul
1994
(Alpha Ontario)

PRACTICE

CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT:

Developing curriculum that is relevant to the workplace and to workers has been a challenge to the field, which, in the beginning relied on Adult Basic Education materials used in the public education system that were not adapted to the workplace. Now, however, there is a growing body of experience with creating curriculum from the needs of the workplace and workers, as well as integrating essential skills into other training and education programs.

Understanding Curriculum Development in the Workplace: A Resource for Educators
Belfiore, Mary Ellen
66 pages
1996

This manual will assist workplace curriculum developers in designing workplace curriculum that suits their needs. The manual walks the reader through the process in five chapters, including:

- Introduction
- Framing Workplace Development
- Interpreting Needs
- Designing a Program
- Developing and Using Materials for the Workplace.

This manual incorporates many case studies to illustrate the process.

ISBN: 0-9699159-3-4
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FAX: (416) 442-2293
e-mail: abccanada@southam.ca
website: http://www.abc-canada.org
Price: $20.00

"Adapting Workplace Materials for Teaching ESL Students" in Basic Skills for the Workplace

ESL Students & Meenan, Avis
12 pages
1991

This chapter examines some of the issues facing students of English as a Second Language (ESL)and how curriculum can be adapted to address their needs. One issue identified is immigrants' need for immediate survival and workplace language skills. According to the author, "One of the primary differences between audio-lingual ESL and job-related ESL is that some audio-lingual programs focus primarily on grammatical objectives, whereas job-related programs focus on job competency objectives, including language skills necessary to perform job tasks." The final part of the chapter examines how to adapt workplace materials for ESL students. The author suggests a method that involves first determining the job-related tasks; then determining what language skills are embedded in these tasks; identifying whether listening, speaking, reading and/or writing skills are involved; as well as the specific cultural information and protocols that are involved. As the author concludes: " . . . Adapting workplace materials for ESL students is a creative enterprise for both teachers and students."

Category: Curriculum Development
ISBN: 0-921472-06-4
OUT OF PRINT
See "Other Collections for information about borrowing this item.

"Thinking Critically in the Workplace" in Basic Skills for the Workplace

Pierce, Gloria
14 pages
1991

The author begins by saying that, "The meaning of literacy in the workplace of the 1990s and the 21st century extends far beyond narrow definitions concerned mainly with reading, writing, computing and other skills required for basic functioning and adapting to the organizational environment." She argues for a holistic model of critical thinking, where, "Judgments include relational as well as rational elements, affective as well as analytical intelligence, subjective as well as objective knowledge." In the workplace, critical thinking "requires that employees (1) become aware of the unintended effects and consequences of their action; (2) identify and challenge the validity of the assumptions and beliefs upon which decision-making criteria and operating practices are based; and (3) expand their awareness to include alternative perspectives, modes of thinking and possible courses of action." The next part of the chapter talks about a workplace case study in a Fortune 500 company that, "Demonstrates . . . a link between critical thinking . . . and bottom-line results." Finally, the author outlines guidelines for program development, including "creating a climate for critical reflection," the "role of facilitator," "promoting dialogue and multiple perspectives."

Category: Curriculum Development
ISBN: 0-921472-06-4
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"How to Design Instruction: From Literacy Task Analyses to Curriculum" in Basic Skills for the Workplace

Phillipi, Jori W.
24 pages
1991

This chapter shows how to "translate literacy task analyses into instructional blueprints." Working from a functional context perspective, the author starts from the point of view that, "Because job tasks analyzed are those identified as critical to job performance by employers, these should be the focal points of curriculum content." Giving concrete examples, she breaks down job tasks into literacy skill applications and develops curriculum based on these needs. She also considers how to develop time blocks for instruction and how to address different ability levels of the participants. In a section on instructional delivery, she counsels that curriculum should be developed, "That most nearly resembles the context in which the skills implications are used to function on the job." Finally, she outlines the components of a functional context curriculum, including an employee needs assessment, a job simulation pretest and post-test, as well as lessons modeling and customized skills application exercises.

Category: Curriculum Development
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PRACTICE

FURTHER READING:

"Using Television for Work Force Basic Skills Training" in Basic Skills for the Workplace

Shafer, Dehra W.
(Alpha Ontario)

Transfer of Learning: Planning Effective Workplace Education Programs

Taylor, Maurice
National Literacy Secretariat
1997

RESOURCES

Clear Language Resources

Alpha Ontario

Alpha Ontario has the most extensive collection of resources in Canada related to Clear Language and Clear Design. Some of their titles include:

Writing Clearly: A Contemporary Approach

Bailey, Edward P. Jr.
1984

Clear Writing and Literacy: How to Recognize Clear Writing, How to Use It, How to Convince Others to Use It

Baldwin, Ruth
1990

Forms for the General Public – Do they Really Work?

Barnett, Robert

How to Prepare Materials for New Literates

Basista, Evie
1986

Clear Writing

Bonet, Diana

Report of the Canadian Bar Association Task Force on Legal Literacy
Canadian Bar Association
1992

Effective Writing at Work
Careers and Occupational Information Centre
1988

Writing Plain English: Why It Should be Done, How It's been Done, How You Can Do It
Cutts, Martin
1980

The Case for Plain Language
Eagleson, Robert
1989

Guidelines for Document Designers
Felker, Daniel B.
1981

W.R.I.T.E.: Write Readable Information to Educate
Hilts, Linda
1989

Clear Language Guidelines for Developing Written Materials
Huron County Health Unit
1989

Clear Language and Design
Jenkinson, Joy
1990

Using Readability: Formulas for Easy Adult Materials
Laubach, Robert S.
1977A Demonstration of Adult Language Empowerment/BEST CAW Local 1893, Northern Telecom
Marks, Christina J.
1991

Plain Words for Consumers: The Language and Layout of Consumer Contracts: The Case for Plain Language Law
National Consumer Council
1984

Clear Lines: How to Compose and Design Clear Language Documents for the Workplace
Nore, Gordon
1991

Writing on Our Side
Progressive Literacy Group
1986

The Productivity of Plain English
U.S. Department of Commerce
1983

Frontier College
Frontier College offers workshops and materials on clear language and document design, including the following:

The Clear Writer's Hit Squad
1990

Contact Miria Iannou for further information at (416) 923-3591.

RESOURCES

Other Bibliographies & Collections

There are three main sources in Canada for unannotated bibliographies and collections on workplace education. They are:

- Alpha Ontario
- Centre for Literacy
- National Adult Literacy Database

Alpha Ontario (effective June 1, 1998 Alpha Ontario's name changed to AlphaPlus Centre):

21 Park Road
Toronto, Ontario
M4W 2N1
website: http://www.mtrl.toronto.on.ca/centres/alpha
e-mail: alphaont@gwmail.mtrl.toronto.on.ca
Toll free: 1-800-363-0007 (Ontario only)
Telephone: (416) 397-5900
FAX:(416) 397-5915
Alpha Ontario produces "Quick Lists" on various topics, including Workplace Literacy. Their staff is very helpful with any search you might want to undertake. Materials are also available to people outside Ontario for a nominal fee.

Centre for Literacy:

3040 Sherbrooke Street West
Montreal, Quebec
H3Z 1A4
Telephone: (514) 931-8731 ext. 1415
FAX: (514) 931-5181
e-mail: literacycntr@dawsoncollege.qc.ca
website: http://www.nald.ca/litcent.htm
The Centre lends materials across Canada.

National Adult Literacy Database (NALD):

Scovil House
703 Brunswick Street
Fredericton, NB E3B 1H8
Toll free: 1-800-720-NALD
Telephone: (506) 457-6900
FAX: (506) 457-6910
e-mail: info@nald.cawebsite:
http://www.nald.ca
With NALD, you can do an on-line search based on subject. NALD also has a number of Full-text Documents that include workplace-related materials. NALD is also one of the best sites for links to other Internet resources. NALD does not lend materials.

Annotated Bibliographies:

The following are annotated bibliographies produced in Canada:

Workplace Literacy: An Annotated Bibliography

48 pages
1990
National Literacy Secretariat

This bibliography presents articles on the subject from the point of view of large corporations, small businesses, organized labour, umbrella organizations and general articles. The articles span about five years until 1990.

Available from:
Can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.

Annotated Bibliography

Manitoba Literacy and Continuing Education Resource Centre Library
26 pages

This bibliography includes items related to the following topics:

- writing skills
- reading skills
- grammar skills
- mathematics skills
- workplace
- cognitive skills.

The materials are available through the Manitoba Literacy and Continuing Education Resource Centre Library.

Available from:
Can be borrowed from Alpha Ontario.

"Working Class Learning Strategies in Transition: Home and Union-based Perspectives" Project Bibliography

Compiled by Peter Sawchuk
150 pages

This very extensive bibliography was put together for the Working Class Learning Strategies Project at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education.

It is divided into nine sections:

- Adult Learning, Education & the Working Class
- Work, Workplace & Learning
- Labour/Worker Education & Learning
- Literacy and Working Class
- Compulsory Schooling and Working Class
- Adult, Family & Education
- Bourdieu & Cultural Capital
- Human Capital.

Available from:
Alpha Ontario

The most useful annotated bibliography produced in the U.S. is:

Workplace Literacy: A Guide to the Literature and Resources

Imel, Susan & Kerka, Sandra
59 pages
1992

This is a model guide, including an analysis of trends in the developing literature base, how to find and select resources, a brief annotated bibliography of selected resources, as well as descriptions of selected programs, resource organizations and references.
Available from:
Alpha Ontario